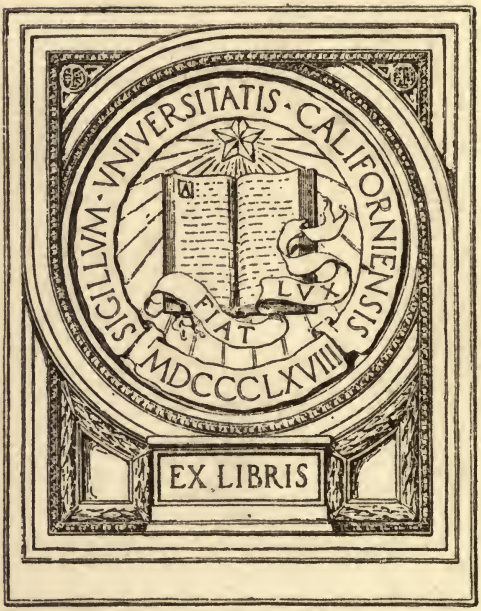
BLIND ALLEY

W. L. GEORGE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BLIND ALLEY

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BLIND ALLEY

BEING THE PICTURE OF A VERY GALLANT GENTLEMAN; THE ADVENTURES OF HIS SPIRIT IN WAR AND PEACE; THE TALE OF HIS DAUGHTERS, HIS SON, THEIR FRIENDS; OF THEIR LOVES AND MISERIES; OF THE WAY OF THE WORLD THROUGH THE GREAT WAR INTO THE UNEXPLORED REGIONS OF PEACE

BY

W. L. GEORGE

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1919

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

TO RUSSET

AND

KALLIKRATES

467201

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BOOK ONE

IN ENGLAND

Weep, willow, weep o'er the stream that wanders,
Yet never retraces its course;
Weep, willow, weep for the twilight of lovers
And all that are racked in a world run astray . . .

BLIND ALLEY

BOOK ONE

IN ENGLAND

I

On soft, felted pads, Kallikrates came out of the library. For a moment, framed in the oak doorway, he stood, his orange coat raised by apprehension. The narrow black lunes of his yellow eyes expanded as, laden with suspicion, he surveyed the noonday emptiness of the hall, the flickering shadows thrown by the log fire; he listened to the ticking of the clock, to the regular snore of Toss, the old collie, who lay before the hearth. His long, sinewy body was banded as an arc, animate with lust and fear; he waited for that something to happen which, instinct and experience told him, must ever be guarded against in the homes of men. But the silence was profound; the intensity receded from the watered agate of his eyes. Kallikrates understood that the conventions still prevailed, that men were eating. Content, he squatted, gave a few casual licks to the thick, silky fur of his left thigh.

Then a new thought entered his mind; he paused, thigh upraised, pink tongue edging as the petal of a peony the pale bluntness of his nose. Immensely watchful, conscious of encircling perils, Kallikrates crept along the wall of the corridor, found the study door open, leapt

and fell, light as a mustard seed, upon his master's desk. At once he felt removed from a world of strife; peace and security held him in fee; soon his lids obscured all save a gleaming stripe of eyeball. A sunbeam fell on his broad flank, burnished the copper markings on the pale gold hair. He furled his tail about him; his squat head sank to the great paws which, one after the other, he folded. Slowly, as a singer humming to himself, he began to purr.

II

As Sir Hugh, a little after his womankind, sat down to lunch, Lady Oakley cried out:

"Hugh! Cradoc says he won't go."

"Oh," said Sir Hugh. "No soup, Sutton, please."

"Oh, do have some hot soup," said Louise Douglas. "You've been out in the wet all the morning."

"Perfectly scandalous!" said Lady Oakley. "That man's had every chance to join up. In '14 you said you'd let him off his rent. When the Derby scheme was on I went to see him myself. But he didn't attest, and now compulsion's come he says he won't go. Hugh, we can't let it go on. We don't want—*what* do they call it, a conscientious objector in the village. You must make him enlist."

"After the soup, dear," said Sir Hugh negligently.

Louise and Monica began to giggle, and Sir Hugh, looking up, caught a gleam of merriment in the eyes of Lee, who stood by the tortured marble-topped Louis XV table, preparing to carve the joint. He looked away hurriedly, but a warmth of friendliness rose between him and the old butler, who had played with him when he was a small boy; the room was filled with a hint of amiable

mockery directed against Lady Oakley. She did not seem to mind. She was a very handsome woman of about forty-five, with thick, dark red hair and a good skin where rose, white and yellow had blended in a pleasant, uniform colour. She was growing rather stout, but hers was a jovial stoutness; the suspicion of mockery did not dull the sherry-bright vivacity of her brown eyes, or stale the good curves of her rather thick lips. Still, she felt impelled to decisive assertions.

"It's all very well your making jokes about it, Hugh. This isn't a joking matter. When the country's come to such a pass, when it needs the services of every able-bodied man and woman, we can't afford to allow examples like the one Cradoc is giving all those young men who've nothing better to do than sit in the King's Arms."

"I thought Cradoc was a teetotaler," said Monica.

"That makes it worse," said Lady Oakley, with much severity and little relevance. "This is not the time for cranks."

"Like the King," said Monica, slewing her grey eyes towards her father. "You know he took the pledge in March, while poor Cradoc . . ."

"Now, Monica," said Lady Oakley, "don't be irritating. Even if the King and Mr. Cradoc *do* do the same thing, it's different. The beef's overdone. Burnt to a cinder. And I don't know what Mrs. Marsden's doing; we never seem to get any fish here."

"One doesn't at the seaside," said Louise; "at least nobody catches anything except the Londoners. We've got a poor little blind Cockney at the hospital; he spends most of his day by the harbour, and he catches as many fish as the Pied Piper caught rats. Poor chap! he was at Gallipoli."

"Ah, yes, Gallipoli," said Sir Hugh gloomily.

There was a long silence, for on that morning, the ninth of January, 1916, England knew that the last inch of that blood-stained peninsula had been abandoned. Sir Hugh felt the remoteness of this gritty, dusty, arid rock on which, beyond his sight, almost beyond his knowledge, so many young Australians, R. N. V. R's, so many of his own Sussex Coast Regiment had fallen. Through the windows, flowered with frost, he saw the English sun fall like silver on the sodden downs which rolled away from Udimore to Rye marsh in its midday veil of opaline haze, to the tree-tufted knoll of Winchelsea, to little red and yellow Rye, to the still, wintry sea, grey as the wing of a cygnet. He sighed, and repeated:

"Ah, yes, Gallipoli!"

"They say we paid the Turks five millions to let us off," said Lady Oakley. She pondered for a moment, and as there was in the Cawston stock from which she sprang a lurking coarseness, added: "They'd have come in on our side for half that if we'd played our cards properly. However, I suppose we must make the best of it. Now we've got compulsion at last, we shall be all right."

"I suppose so," said Sir Hugh. "Still it seems a pity. I thought the Derby scheme would pull us through without our having to come to this. I'd have liked to think — but what's the good? War's not cricket. At least, not the way it's played nowadays."

"Of course it's not cricket," cried Lady Oakley. "We've got to win. And though we've got all sorts of people trying to set class against class, people like that man Simon, who resigns because he's against compulsion instead of sticking to his guns like a decent man — Monica, I won't be interrupted."

"But, Mother, I didn't say anything."

"You were going to say something," said Lady Oakley, presumably conscious that her daughter, in the irritating way which recalled her father's worst moments, had detected some gap in her logic. Swiftly she carried the attack into her daughter's lines. "Instead of sitting there making fun of me, and I'm sure I don't know about what, you'd do much better to be doing something. In days like these, when every able-bodied man and woman . . ."

"I know, I know, Mother," said Monica. "It's not my fault if I'm not as strong as a dray horse like Louise, and can't scrub stairs and mend roofs, which, I believe, is the chief occupation of hospital nurses. Whenever I want to do something you don't like it."

"Well, then, you should want to do something else."

"But you don't like that, Mother. You wouldn't let me go out with the Motor Ambulance people."

"Sylvia went, and you know it wasn't a success. A little more currant roll, Sutton."

"And when I had that chance at the Foreign Office . . ."

"How can you be a clerk in the Foreign Office with two uncles and a grandfather in it?"

"Please don't quarrel, Lena," said Sir Hugh. A pucker of irritation formed between his level, black brows. He was a thin man, of medium size, with square, greyish hair. He looked about fifty, but his dark grey eyes, Monica's eyes, were still young. The hand that stroked the clipped, black and grey moustache was large but well-modelled; it arrested attention less than the high, bony, beak-like nose, which had been set as a brand upon the face of nearly every male Oakley for the last two centuries. Sir Hugh looked accurate and wide-minded; there was about him flexibility as well as

hardness, as if he were a rapier-man rather than a bludgeon-man.

So, by degrees, the Sunday dinner came to its end, combative and rich in irritations, as if that morning's tragedy in the Ægean Sea had stirred little passions into great ones, marred the peaceful loveliness of that old house by the Channel. Lady Oakley moved away to the drawing-room to resume her perusal of the last volume of Mr. Ian Hay, an author whom she ranged second only to Mr. Kipling. The two girls reappeared for a moment in the lime avenue, — thick-booted, loud-tweeded, felt-hatted, — and disappeared, while Sir Hugh, without a smile, received from the butler a saucer on which lay some shavings of the overdone beef. With this he walked away towards the study.

III

The dining room at Knapenden Place was closely indicative of its owner. The house itself was neither very old nor beautiful. Built in the seventeenth century by an early Oakley, it bore the heavy brick brand of the Queen Anne taste that fell, respectable as a policeman's white-gloved hand, on the airy rascalities of Stuart architects. It lay on the top of Udimore ridge, looking towards the sea, solemn rather than defiant. Behind the broad hall ran the library, a dusty store of fungus-threatened country histories, collected sermons, remains of the Pusey and the Paley controversies, three-volume novels in the last stage of obscurity, diaries of silly tours written by silly noblemen, the usual lumber room of the country house, where small boys play cricket on wet days and are ultimately swished. A few family portraits, an Oakley in a slashed doublet by an unknown

painter, an Oakley in a braided uniform, a pretty girl painted by Hoppner prettily; Romney's exquisite "Belinda", and the overflow of Sir Hugh's collection of George Morlands.

The right wing held the drawing-room, very white and gilt, crackling with chintz, much cumbered with Bartolozzis and Lowestoft china. It extended itself into the ballroom that, in those days of war, was pitifully cold, with its dust-sheeted chairs and swathed chandelier. The left wing was almost entirely occupied by the big dining room, harmonious and lovely, with its white walls and scarlet brocade curtains; Sir Hugh's precious Morlands, twenty-three in number, hung there, sober and mellow, along the line. Sir Hugh loved that long room, the prospect over the South Terrace to the lime avenue, Knapenden village and the sea, but he found a greater intimacy in the small rooms that ran along the back, — a little morning room abutting on the now parrotless aviary, a gun room with the brown, balanced barrels quietly shining in their glass case. He liked close places, where friendly objects jostle their possessor, so he loved his study best of all; it was his keep, almost as secret as the keep of his heart.

The study was a smallish room on the right side of the hall. Its walls were of carved oak, entirely hidden by a close covering of shelves where books were crowded and tumbled without much order. They were a strange and large selection, books suggesting a certain diversity of interests, "The Wealth of Nations", "Progress and Poverty", many modern novels, quite close to "The Principles of Banking"; evidently the owner was a politician and a man of affairs, for he had collected Morley's "On Compromise", Cromer's "Modern Egypt", and many such like; much of the space was occupied by the Trans-

actions of the Institute of Bankers, and by crowding blue books, some in the last stage of decay and dirt. Indeed, the study was worthy of love, for it was much dirtier than the whole house put together, the sort of study that has a quality of the intangible because people seldom dust it. It had other sides, too, rather stranger, exemplified by a number of French novels, nearly all Anatole France, some Zola, a good many Balzacs, some French translations of Dostoievsky, and unexpectedly Villiers de l'Isle Adam and Barbey d'Aurevilly. Sprawling in the middle of the desk lay "La Chartreuse de Parme", a ninepenny-halfpenny edition, obviously picked up on a bookstall. A large desk, eight feet long, a hard wood armchair, fit for a saint turned bookkeeper, and a couple of large club armchairs, fit for a saint in moments of temptation. No pictures, but many pipes. Along the edge of the desk a row of photographs of vivid-looking young people, and on the right-hand corner, humped and purring, Kallikrates in a state of wary somnolence.

Sir Hugh came in quite quietly, carrying the saucer. He trod gently, for he wanted to surprise Kallikrates, an old ambition so far ungratified. Seeing that a stripe of watchful amber appeared under the cat's eyelids, Sir Hugh sat down, placing the saucer beside him, and vaguely busied himself with "La Chartreuse de Parme." This bespoke another ambition: to induce Kallikrates to display desire; this, too, was seldom gratified. After a moment he looked sideways at the cat and in despair said to him: "I've no time for you. I've got a heavy job on. We're going to hold up some roads, most of the roads; we've no men to make them, do you hear?" As Kallikrates showed no signs of hearing, Sir Hugh took up the East Sussex Council Scheme, proposing to maintain trunk roads, to abandon certain arteries in rural

districts, and for a moment absorbed himself in this work.

For Sir Hugh Oakley was what is called a practical man; son of a diplomat, he found in his line mostly country gentlemen, here and there a soldier and, most notably, his grandfather, killed at Trafalgar. He himself had been intended for the diplomatic service, but that shrewd, hard streak in him which was suggested by his bony nose had brought him to desire some practical association with life. He had thought of politics, of the amiable spaciousness of Liberal Unionism, but at bottom he preferred realities. So he had drifted into an old, private bank, allied to the Oakleys, of which they had always been a little ashamed. Sir Hugh found no prejudice in himself; he had enjoyed those twenty years in the bank, and would leave the Oakleys a little richer than he had found them, which was not done in his family. Now he had retired, and his activities were mainly local, concerned with the county council, with the harbour board, with all things that needed the unusual combination of good breeding and good brains. Sir Hugh liked business; a balance sheet gave him the sensual satisfaction that the mathematician finds in a perfect solution: for a balance sheet — balances. That is so harmonious.

But that day the disturbance of the morning was still on him, and after a moment he laid down the road plan, turned to Kallikrates and put forward a finger until it was but half an inch from the cat's nose. Slowly Kallikrates opened his eyes and looked at him with a gaze in which was no emotion, not even surprise. Sir Hugh despised himself as he pushed his finger still closer to touch the firm, cool nose and at last, as an honour, to receive the condescending caress of the long, white whiskers. It was not much, but still Sir Hugh supposed it was love, so he pushed forward the saucer, at which

Kallikrates gazed with an air of armed neutrality. Irritated, Sir Hugh pushed it still further until the meat lay under the cat's nose. But Kallikrates sniffed and turned away his head as if his master had made him some unseemly proposal.

Sir Hugh bent forward, smiling, and said: "Bloated Pharisee, corpulent capitalist. There you sit, swathed in your furry fat, olympian and repulsive as a Jove satiated with nectar and ambrosia. You're like all cats, a vile freeman, escaped from the trammels of life. Like all your breed you know the art of survival, how to obtain food without labour, house room without confinement, love without its penalties. You are irresponsible and vile, empyrean and adorable."

Then Kallikrates slowly turned away from the offence of the gratuitous offering, about his haunches furled the sunset of his tail, sank into sleep.

And Sir Hugh, looking out for a moment over the gravelled court, to the humid marshes, wrapped in grey gauze like Rhine maidens, fell to thinking of those people before him in their silver photograph frames, of his daughter Sylvia, so large in her heavy furs, so dominating that even in the photograph her hair looked matted with natural oils, her thick mouth, like her mother's, imperious. He reflected that he did not love his daughter as much as a father should. Somehow Sylvia was excessive. She had married poor Langrick so suddenly, when the war broke out, just as so many thousands of girls had married then, because the war was a stimulus, or a warning that life is short, or perhaps because they were jealous of the great adventure granted to men, and determined to affront the only adventure that is woman's, the adventure of love. And Langrick had been shot. And she had nearly married other people, at least so it

had seemed. And now she had just married Jervaulx. Ah! she was not like Monica.

Sir Hugh took up the other photograph and looked for some time at the curious, half-beautiful face of his other daughter. Too tall, of course, too thin, not the beauty of the family. But the serious eyes that looked at him touched something intimate, not by any copy-book virtue of young-girlish sincerity, but by some questfulness in their cool depth. Something humorous, too, clung about the corners of the broad mouth. Yes, his daughter more than Sylvia; his eyes; the only one who had his eyes. Not even Stephen, who stood there, a knobbly hobbledehoy, with big bones sticking out at unexpected places through the khaki, Stephen who carried the great Oakley nose with the thin-skinned bridge, no, not even Stephen was his son as much as Monica was his daughter. For there hung in Stephen's ironic eyes something that always disquieted his father: even at school he had been so self-assured, so clearly a skeptic; he had never respected anything; he had never even condescended to break a law. Stephen was not the young generation knocking at the door: he had been born on the other side.

"What is to become of all of them? Of all of us?" thought Sir Hugh, as for a moment he rested his chin upon the large hand. "All of us thrown head-first into convulsion, all of us who were born in peace. Here we are with eighteen months of it behind us. Of course it won't last. There's the offensive coming this summer. Might finish by Christmas with a little luck. But still — there's Sylvia, twice married before she's twenty-three — and Monica twenty-six and not married at all. Married! and what of it in war time? Sylvia's lost one man — Jervaulx's in an infantry regiment, who knows? And young Hurn. He seemed fond of Monica — per-

haps a sniper's got him while we were having lunch. And Stephen too. We sent a battalion of Sussex Coast to Gallipoli. Where is it? Perhaps . . ."

But here Sir Hugh stopped suddenly as he thought of his long, bony son. Now, beyond the very faintest doubt, under fire, as he thought of him. No, he must not think of it. Or all the time he'd think of it. And Stephen writing him hideous, cheerful letters with messages to his mother, saying he'd taken to woodbines since she'd written him about national economy. A flicker of rage passed through Sir Hugh, and he said aloud: "Damn Bairnsfather."

With an effort he cast aside the sorrow of the world; he blotted out the picture of change. Change has risen about him as water that ripples along the side of a breakwater, engulfing one by one the riches gained by civilisation, easy feeding, easy clothing, uncensored opinions, and laughter, and dancing, and pictures worth looking at; it had given him instead the scarlet and gold of such a war, with all the splendid, canting merriment of youthful self-sacrifice. It must be, it was necessary, it was right. And it must go on — a music-hall snatch ran through his mind, " Until we've wound up the watch on the Rhine."

With a conscious effort Sir Hugh broke away from this thing like a black, hairy monster, like a drawing by Edmund Sullivan, took up " La Chartreuse de Parme " to hide in the comic-opera passion of Fabrice those shapes that had arisen from the mist. Then he grew conscious of a contact: very softly, like a voluptuous sultana that stretched her lithe body, Kallikrates had turned and laid upon the back of his hand the caress, light as a butterfly's wing, of a cool, velvet-edged pad.

IV

Lady Oakley was always busy on Monday mornings. She felt better on Monday morning, which shows that at heart she must have been a religious woman. Also, because she felt better, she realised that the household was not run in the way it should be. She was not responsible for the household; this duty belonged to Mrs. Marsden, and Lady Oakley did not like quarrelling with Mrs. Marsden, for the housekeeper said "Yes, my lady", and in the end did something quite different. So, this morning, as she noticed Lee doing nothing in particular at the dining-room door (which he was quite justified in doing, being the butler) she went up to him and said: "By the way, Lee, I suppose you realise that under the new act Sutton will be called up."

"No, my lady. He was rejected when he attested."

"Oh, there won't be anybody rejected now. He'll have to go, and Peele'll have to go too. And — let me see, I expect Temple will pass. We'll have to get women in."

"Wimmin!" cried Lee. (Rather than a cry it was a squeak of horror.) "Wimmin! Did your ladyship say wimmin?"

"Yes," said Lady Oakley ferociously. "I hope that within six months every man in this village and who can walk will be gone."

"Very well, my lady," said Lee, and went away. He was a large, stout man, with the watery eyes that are often met among butlers and deans. His nose gave him a false air of authority; indeed, it was as like Sir Hugh's nose as was proper in a servant.

Lady Oakley looked for a moment after his vast retreating rotundities. Then, feeling better, she walked along the lime avenue towards the village.

It was not far to the village; indeed, the whole of old Knapenden lay within the boundary of the fifteen-hundred-acre estate. From Knapenden Place, straight past the south terrace and round the lawn, the road ran through the lime avenue, down the vale, and rose suddenly as it joined the main road. Here was the village green, a triangular patch near a muddy pond, surrounded by the microcosm of English rural life: cobbler, workingmen's club, grocer, inn, ironmonger (with cycle and perhaps motor-car ambitions). In an offshoot of the main road vegetated a draper and luxuriated a butcher, while a chemist of considerable superiority enhanced his aloofness with the dignities of the Civil Service, represented by the post-office. On the south side of the green stood the altogether atrocious 1860 church. It was built on the site of some older and more modest fane, but now, with pitch-pine pews and the smell thereof, and steam-fathered stained glass, it might have been called St. Samuel Smiles. By its side was built the vicarage, all brick, suggesting a wealthy glebe, founded upon a faith that sought not support in another region. Three more little streets of labourers' cottages; that was all.

Beyond the eastern boundary, a New Knapenden was rising, a Knapenden known as Villa-Land, where every cottage looked as if it were built for the peasant, but housed the week-ender or the pensioner; where the ample land had parsimoniously been split up by the builder who had bought up Udimore Down and re-christened it "A Desirable Lot"; where the preliminaries of drains and of gas lamps had carved into the turf, and where, right and left, without plan, ran Greville Road and Chatsworth Place. Already Balmoral Avenue was indicated by a boundary of palings beyond which had accumulated, no one knew how, many tins, dead cats and old hats.

The Oakleys instinctively disliked Villa-Land and never turned to the east. They were not age-crusted people, but they liked the new to arise from the old, not to be grafted.

So Lady Oakley, following tradition, went down into the village. She stopped for a moment at the cross-roads. On that bright, frosty morning there still hung a white speck on every blade of grass. She could see the land roll away, past the road lined with naked oaks and ash, towards Winchelsea marsh that was all hers, and out of which rose Ballagher's Farm. All that was Oakley land, to the south and to the west, below the ridge to Stoat's Farm, and above it, where it fell away to the Rother, and again where it rose to the high row of firs. All Oakley land except, south of the green, the four hundred acres of Ascalon Farm. Ascalon Farm was an unrealised ambition of the Oakley family. One did not quite know how, but apparently Sir Hugh's great-grandfather, after three days' indulgence in casino at Brighton, when he had the honour to lose five monkeys to the Regent himself, persuaded the hero of Trafalgar to agree to the breaking of the entail. An ancestor of Hart, the present tenant, bought the freehold of Ascalon Farm: tempt him, and threaten him, and cajole him as he might, Sir Hugh's father had never been able to buy it back.

But Lady Oakley was not by nature meditative. She turned past the inn and into the post-office where, at the moment, stood the Knapenden version of a crowd, one old lady drawing her old-age pension, and two little girls sucking jujubes. Mr. Balcombe bent forward, affable and dignified, conscious of being together a Civil Servant and a member of the Pharmaceutical Society, with an air of "What can I do for you? A penny stamp or a blue pill?"

"Good morning," said Lady Oakley. She responded briefly to kind enquiries as to the health of the several members of her family. Profoundly interesting, no doubt. Then, having bought some postal orders required by benefactions, she added:

"And I want some War Savings stamps."

Mr. Balcombe looked dismayed and incredulous.

"What!" said Lady Oakley, "you haven't got any War Savings stamps! Like these," and she took from her large, countrified, pigskin hand-bag two little labels. The more notable of the two showed hands pouring out shillings which by some mysterious process turned, at the bottom of the stamp, into pink War Savings books and bank notes. "Turn your shillings into pounds," it urged in imperial scarlet.

"Everybody ought to use them," said Lady Oakley. "We want them on every letter, on every newspaper. People who are not fighting ought not to think of anything else."

"I'm sure I'm very sorry. Your ladyship may be sure — I will enquire . . ."

But Lady Oakley's preoccupations took a different turn.

"And, oh, Mr. Balcombe, you haven't sent up the sanatogen. Sir Hugh's missed it for three days now, and that's not good for him."

"I'm very sorry, my lady," said the chemist, more dismayed than ever. "This war, you see . . ."

"Oh, yes, yes. I know. The war. But surely you can get some sanatogen from London."

Mr. Balcombe leant over the counter and looked about as if the Defence of the Realm Act lurked in the back shop. "The fact is — I didn't like to tell your ladyship, but sanatogen's German."

Lady Oakley perceptibly recoiled. "German! Do you mean to say that . . ."

She didn't finish her sentence. Horrible pictures of poisoned fish and sweets invaded her mind as she reflected that for eighteen months of war Sir Hugh's nerves had been sustained from a German source.

"Yes, my lady. So I didn't think it would do."

"Quite right, quite right."

"I hear there's a substitute, quite English, that one . . ."

"M'yes," said Lady Oakley, with a shade of doubtfulness. "A substitute. Oh, well, we'll see. After all, I'm not so sure it was doing Sir Hugh as much good as all that. So much advertised, you know. Those Germans get in everywhere."

"Oh, yes, my lady, especially in drugs. There's odol, for instance."

Lady Oakley flung Mr. Balcombe a look in which was some slight malevolence. She herself enjoyed odol. One had to be patriotic, but really it was very annoying. So she felt relieved when Mr. Denny came into the shop, for she might have discovered that bread and beef were German too, and she belonged to a generation which has no affection for knowledge combined with inconvenience. "Oh, Mr. Denny," she said to the little, sandy-haired vicar, "I want to talk to you."

"Delighted, I'm sure," said the vicar. A little perturbed by the feeling that he might be indictable for something, he hastened to buy postcards, and refrained from purchasing drugs which he considered unmentionable. So, together, Lady Oakley and the vicar walked towards the green. He was a quiet, hesitating man, but behind his hesitation resided a lively sense of his own rights and privileges; Mr. Denny had never dropped his

bread save butter-side up. Amiable and broad, he conducted the usual services on Sunday, and at other times kept the dust out of the church by locking the door. If people did not communicate often enough, it was because the flesh is weak; if they communicated after breakfast it was better than not communicating at all. For the rest, he maintained the social interests that befitted his position, and was a passionate stamp collector. Sir Hugh had once described him as every inch a philatelist.

"What I wanted to ask," said Lady Oakley, "is what the Council is going to do about Brunswick Cottages. I say 'Paris Cottages.'"

"Well, we discussed it the other night, and of course the Council agrees. They were thinking of Marne Cottages and that is the difficulty, Lady Oakley, because there's a party forming who wants to call them Joffre Cottages. And we feel a thing like that ought not to be done by a majority. I mean," and Mr. Denny, with a broad wave of his hand, expressed a sense of enfolding brotherliness, "in times like these we feel we must be united."

"Nonsense," said Lady Oakley, with a gleam in her brown eye. "What does it matter if we are united or not united if we get what we want? I say 'Paris Cottages' because the postman will remember it more easily. So long as they're not called 'Brunswick Cottages' I don't care."

"Yes," said Mr. Denny. "But the fact is—I hardly like to tell you, but the real trouble is that one of the members of the Council says it's very awkward always to be changing the names of cottages because, as he puts it, you never know."

"You never know what?" asked Lady Oakley, stopping.

"Oh, I'm only repeating what he says. He says that — well, in 1898, supposing they had been called Paris Cottages and Fashoda had led to war, we couldn't have called them by a French name, could we?"

"Well?"

"Well, he says that if we turn 'Brunswick Cottages' into 'Paris Cottages', if one of these days we have trouble with the French we may have to call them 'New York Cottages.' And he's asking if we're prepared to come down to 'Pekin Row.'" Mr. Denny smiled. He did not think it necessary to press the point.

"Who is this person who has so much imagination?"

"Mr. Cradoc."

"Oh," said Lady Oakley, with peculiar, slow intensity. "I ought to have known it was Mr. Cradoc. Of course Mr. Cradoc would have ideas." Lady Oakley underlined "ideas", indicating them as a minor form of obscenity. "Well, Mr. Denny," she went on quietly, "when you see Mr. Cradoc again, you might ask him whether he thinks it worth while pressing the point, as he is not very likely to be re-elected."

"No, I suppose not," said Mr. Denny. "I know his views. Most unfortunate. Most unfortunate!"

"It's not unfortunate at all. It's disgraceful. Here's the new grocer, an impostor, who's as good as ruined poor Evenwood, a man whom no one knows anything about, a shopman from Hastings, who comes here and preaches disloyalty to people who have never thought of it, a man who sits here making war profits, sheltering behind the country's laws and refusing to do his bit in upholding them. Such a man, who makes his conscience his protection . . ."

Mr. Denny nodded sagely for a moment, while reminiscences of several leading articles incorporated them-

selves in Lady Oakley's speech. Then she fell into the vernacular.

"It can't go on, Mr. Denny. We can't have it. You must speak to him."

"Oh, how can I? You see he doesn't attend the church."

"Then the Church must go to him."

Mr. Denny thought this apostolic, but rather tactless, and said so, putting it differently.

"You must speak to him," said Lady Oakley, passing over his hesitations as calmly as a steam-roller over a slug. "In days like these, it's the duty of the Church to assert itself and to send forth a Message. Those who won't hear it must suffer for it. Anyhow, I am withdrawing my account. But I'm not thinking of that; we want this — stain removed from the village. We want everybody to realise that we have a magnificent cause, and that a man should be glad to be alive to . . ."

"Die for it," suggested Mr. Denny.

Lady Oakley looked at him with some haughtiness. She disliked epigrams.

"People are too much afraid of dying," she said. "Everybody dies. They may as well die decently. They should be glad to die for a cause like ours. Ah, I wish I were a man!"

"All right," said Mr. Denny. "I'll have a word with him."

Lady Oakley was not listening. She said again, with slow intensity:

"Ah, I wish I were a man," and in her eyes, that seemed to have grown larger and harder, shone a light Amazonian. In that moment she was transfigured, inflamed with thoughts of valorous carnage, of intrepidity converting the forlorn into the victorious; the harmonies

of battle rang in her ears; God was with her as He is *mit uns*. Then she was an Englishwoman rather than a woman. She was — Wagnerian.

V

Slowly the train wandered towards the northeast. Upon the right, Romney marsh made a pattern of brownish-green tussocks and spears of shining water. Sir Hugh took from his attaché case, which bulged with papers taken home from the office of the Southern Board of Control, a letter from Stephen. It was characteristic that Stephen should write mainly to his father. It was the usual sort of letter from the front, with plenty of " cheer up, we'll soon be dead " about it; the young man did not suggest that he risked his life for any reason other than sport or class automatism. The parts that concerned the family, the references to Sylvia, to whom Stephen sent his congratulations on her chucking the Fannies (by which, he confided to his father, he meant his condolences; the Nursing Yeomanry having chucked *her*), his gibe at Monica who, he said, would doubtless soon marry some unfortunate young man who knew no better, and set up with him in a house furnished exclusively with angular cosy corners and high ideals, all this was just the pleasant, cheery Stephen. And Sir Hugh did not even mind his message to Lady Oakley, who had written to him saying we wanted a Man: " Tell mother that she won't get her Man. She asks too much of a Man (' Morning Post ' type). What she wants is (1) a thing that never thinks; (2) a thing who, however, always acts. The activity of a gadfly. The adhesive quality of a limpet. And a face fit to kill a camera. Briefly, what they call a Personality."

Queer young man. How old they grew at the Var-

sity. Sir Hugh looked out at Appledore station where, for a long time, they persuaded reluctant horses into a van which they looked upon as a trap. He wondered what would become of Stephen, nipped by the war in the middle of his second year. He could not go back to school, which, after all, was what Oxford amounted to, after — three years, perhaps more, of this sort of thing. Then he returned to the letter. Strange chap! Here he was telling how, the other day, the Boche was shelling heavily on the left, whizzbangs mostly, and how, at a certain moment, with a funny wet sound, there fell into the trench, quite close to him, the leg of a Highlander. Was it merely side that made Stephen punctuate this event with the remark: "And a damned smart, well-turned-out leg and legging it was, too!" and pass on to his difficulty with the other officers as to the regimental mascot: "Ever since the Seaforths next door played themselves into their billets behind a goat, poor old Sussex Coast felt it must have a mascot of its own. Adjutant in the chair, blind as usual, and a perfect chairman. Didn't make myself popular that night; one of our latest T. G's., cockney of course, said that being a coast regiment we wanted an animal with something naval about it. I suggested a tin of sardines. If we'd been regulars it would have been all right, but the poor old 3rd/5th is so frightfully cocky about being in the army that it didn't go down a bit. I'm afraid I haven't got the right feeling about this war."

No! Sir Hugh smiled, but he hardly thought that Stephen had the right feeling about this war. He was always ragging it. Could that mean that inside he thought it unspeakable? And would that be better than thinking it glorious? And it was, Sir Hugh reflected, a glorious and necessary war, the war of light against dark,

the cross unsought, but infinitely rewarding to the shoulders chosen by fate to bear it. No, there was no Galahad in this young man, and Sir Hugh supposed that this was the new type we were breeding, as brave and as generous as ever, but determined to be airy about it, as if the race were getting tired and ashamed of emotion. Sir Hugh did not despise emotion; he was a Victorian and he knew it; thrift, the doctrines of Herbert Spencer, and ill-rolled umbrellas did not offend him; once upon a time he had worn elastic-sided boots, and he still read the *Spectator*.

So it was cruel, in a way, that a little later, when he reached his office at Ashford, he should find himself in compulsory contact with the new type of civil servant, namely, the business man. Sir Hugh knew that his fellow members on the Board were far more useful than the civil servant of the old school, that they had qualities such as ruthlessness (frightfulness?), a fine disregard for manners, a contempt for precedent, a desire to overcome each other which often enabled their departments to excel each other — and yet sometimes he regretted the civil servant he had met in a long life, that man of oil, steel, and silk, capable of every delay and grace, suggestive of every sympathy and capable of none, invariably accommodating and inevitably elusive, incapable of a lie, always capable of an evasion, determined in public utility, yet not blind to private advancement, singularly addicted to justice, yet unable to suffer mercy, not a man, but a theorem, a diagram, a syllogism. No good! Scrap the old machine which once went so gently — backwards — and out with the new machine, puffing and pounding and tearing up the old rails, swiftly moving forward to — well, perhaps to the dogs.

Often that day the thought of Stephen, so much the

tail end of a race, the last of the gentlemen, too disdainful to use the intellect that had pitched on him as unexpectedly as the egg of a cuckoo appears in the nest of a wren. He compared him with those others, with Calvert, whose name was a household word in cement circles, with Holmes, who had created a vast fortune on an advertisement advising mankind to "Japan your Pan." What was going to become of them? Where were they going to stand after the war, in the political body of this dear, dusty old England? It was all right during the war, when the old lady was excited, indulging in a sort of colossal rummage sale. Just now the row suited the old lady. But after? When she wanted to settle down again on her customary settee? She'd engaged a new kind of manager, a cross between an American commercial traveller and a Syrian carpet merchant. She couldn't turn him out and call back the first division of the civil service to let her alone. Poor old lady! Her business men in power were going to stay in power, because power is what they seek. After the war they would control her, regulate her and order her about in council. Sir Hugh sighed as he thought of the business man making old England hop. Or, as Holmes put it, 'op.

As, later in the evening, he took the train home, he noticed the newspaper of one of England's leading business men. It had just produced a placard of which it obviously was proud:

"YOU
POTSDAM
SCOUNDREL."

An excellent sentiment, thought Sir Hugh, but — in what elegant terms our messages we couch!

VI

Mr. Denny was a good man. That is, he never did any harm to anybody, and he always acted for the best according to his rushlights. He realised that, though he was pastor of his flock, and depended not at all upon the squire, still, if he agreed with Lady Oakley, there was no harm in doing what Lady Oakley wished. He belonged to the Church of England, and found it easy to think in compromises. So he disliked speaking to Cradoc, having to take up an attitude of definite condemnation. He would have preferred disapprovingly to condone. Still, there it was, and his deeds formulated his disposition, for in the end he did not seek out the conscientious objector: as he went along the village street he found his attention attracted by the smell of burning coffee. "Ah," said Mr. Denny to himself, "that's Mr. Cradoc roasting coffee. That reminds me that Lady Oakley said I must talk to him." And, quite honestly thinking that this little fact had reminded him of the duty which had actually been oppressing him for several hours, Mr. Denny went into the shop. Cradoc looked at him with a certain surprise. He was a small, thinnish man, with black hair, a ragged moustache, and the air of taut determination which often sits upon people who have nourished their spirit and neglected their body.

"What can I do for you?" asked Cradoc, with a lift in his voice that meant: "I suppose you don't want a Chiver's Jelly; it must be my soul you're after."

"Oh," said Mr. Denny, "I was just passing . . ."

Cradoc looked at him thoughtfully. He was not accustomed to visits from the clergy, though he had often exchanged a word with Mr. Denny. He was embarrassed because he found it difficult to understand that a

man could believe in an all-powerful creative God; so the only way in which he could talk to a clergyman was to humour him, as one does the inoffensive insane.

"Oh, yes," said Cradoc. Then, feeling discussions imminent, he called to his sister to mind the shop and asked Mr. Denny to step into the parlour.

Mr. Denny automatically took the central position on the hearthrug and stared at this parlour. A disquieting place rather, with its whitewashed walls, its two or three autotypes framed in oak, a rather upsetting picture of Bernard Shaw by Joseph Simpson, red tie and all, a large labour poster after Steinlen, a rack filled with books which were probably not the "hundred best", surmounted by a very regrettable nude.

"The fact is," said Mr. Denny, "I wanted to have a few words with you, Mr. Cradoc, if you don't think it an impertinence."

The grocer made conciliatory sounds.

"It was — er — I mean — er — this military service business. Compulsion, you know."

"Yes," said Cradoc.

"I mean, it has — well, changed everything."

"Yes," said Cradoc.

Mr. Denny found it desirable to become breezy: "I've been hearing about your views and — er — it's not for me to criticise them; every man for his conscience, every man for his conscience, even though it does make cowards of us all." He stopped, for Cradoc had grinned at this. "Ahem," reflected Mr. Denny, "I didn't mean to put it like that." So, hurriedly, he went on: "I've been told that you have a conscientious objection to war. Well, so have I, so have I. I mean, any Christian would conscientiously object to war; only there are circumstances which alter the most profound convictions."

"Can they be so profound if they alter?" asked Cradoc.

"Well, let us not say convictions, let us say — predilections. I quite understand that a right-thinking mind objects to killing. I know," added Mr. Denny in a tone of extensive tolerance for that book, "that in the Bible you will find a commandment that you should not kill but — er — one might be too literal in the interpretation of what is revealed."

"In other words, one should interpret it as suits one."

"I said no such thing. Only there are necessary exceptions to the most golden rules."

"I'm afraid not."

For a moment the two men looked at each other, trying to find a meeting ground, the conscientious objector so entirely confined within the rigidities of his own views that his conception of personal liberty placed him in handcuffs, the cleric so determined to scrape what goodness he could from a rebellious world that he found himself lost in it, like a fly in gelatine. Then Mr. Denny returned to the charge.

"I quite understand that your spiritual principles — oh, you need not shake your head — we all have spiritual principles, even if, like you, some people are a little undenominational."

"I am an atheist," said Cradoc. "But go on, Mr. Denny."

"A very big word, but we're not talking of religion. What I wanted to suggest is that compulsion has altered things, because now it is no longer a question of who will enlist and who will not. Everybody has to go."

"Except me," said Cradoc.

"My dear sir! You can't do that, you really can't do that."

"A better man than I had conscientious objections to a certain religious system nineteen centuries ago, Mr. Denny."

"Please don't be blasphemous."

"I'm being historical; those may be synonymous terms."

"I've already said we are not talking about religion, but I should like to point out that in the Thirty-Nine Articles which are in your prayer book you will find that the Church allows the faithful to engage in wars."

"In the name of universal love?"

"Love should not be taken literally. Love must be interpreted as it is by the father who is compelled to chastise his child. I quite agree, Mr. Cradoc, that you should love your enemies . . ."

"But hate a Frenchman like poison, as Lord Nelson said. I'm afraid, Mr. Denny, that this remark of his lordship was rather unfortunate in the light of present alliances."

"Oh, circumstances change with time. That was a very regrettable period."

"Still, we cannot ignore it. To me our dependence on Blucher sterilises our present dependence upon Joffre. Changing enemies and changing friends deprive one of belief in either."

"Are these matters not a little deep?" said Mr. Denny. "Is not our case much simpler, I might say much purer, than anything such musty, historical arguments can suggest? Here we are, entirely unprepared for war . . ."

"With our fleet fully mobilized."

"For defence only. Compelled by a solemn engagement to protect Belgium against aggression . . ."

"An obligation which we ignored in the case of Denmark."

"Faced by a brutal autocracy determined to enforce the lowest forms of materialism upon the world . . ."

"A world at present dignified by the highest forms of spirituality as exhibited in our machine shops, our daily press and our streetwalkers."

Mr. Denny paused. "I do think it's a pity we should wrangle like this. Let me put it to you more simply. When you see the other men forsake their wives, their children, their sweethearts, their little businesses, throwing all up at the behest of a generous impulse, going out to do their bit, can you bear to be left behind?"

Mr. Denny made a gesture of appeal, and was entirely honest in his emotion; he longed to lead Cradoc to the recruiting station quite as much as he would have liked to bring him to salvation. But Cradoc shook his head.

"No, I'm afraid not. Don't worry about me, Mr. Denny; it would be no use being an Israelite unless there were a few Ishmaelites. I've got to be one of those. Crucify me. I shall not mind it as much as you think, it will please my vanity; it would be as much fun as being a Christian martyr."

"I don't understand you at all. There's no idea of ill-treating you. I am merely suggesting that if you maintain this attitude you will find yourself a social outcast; you will stand beyond the pale as the man who refused to take up arms in a just cause while sheltering behind the bayonets of those who went — Lady Oakley says she will stop dealing with you and go back to Mr. Evenwood, even though his son is, I'm afraid, rather wild."

Cradoc shook his head. "No, it's no good, Mr. Denny. I'm not going. I'm not going to do anything. I'm not going to make munitions for other men to blow one another to pieces with and pretend I've nothing to do with the war. I'm not going to the ambulances to patch them

together so that they may go on killing one another. I'm not going to do anything except register my protest. You may say that's no good. That's because I'm in the minority. When I am in the majority I shall be right. It is sometimes expedient that a man should die for the people."

"Don't be rhetorical," said Mr. Denny. And he went away, his kindly heart rather heavy because this difficult, rebellious man, who thought wrong and felt wrong, must suffer, and because Mr. Denny hated anybody to suffer. He preached a religion of mortification and pain, but he practised a life where he sought to shed upon all men so much comfort and good cheer as he could muster.

VII

"Father," said Monica, as she gently closed the study door, "may I speak to you?"

He looked up, and as he said vaguely: "Yes, what is it, dear?" found himself thinking of her in an abstract way. His daughter, but what a stranger somehow, this young woman of twenty-six, so warmly pale, with grey eyes that might be soft or ironic, and the broad mouth, made to smile for love or droop for tears. She looked very tall that night; her white arms seemed thin; the frock that hung, precariously it seemed, from her delicately thin shoulders by two straps of silver and sapphire, fell in straight, soft folds, unbroken by a belt, to the silken blue insteps in the silver shoes. As upon his desk the snake reading-lamp was turned down to keep the light from his eyes, Monica in the shadow was as a ghost imprisoned in a moonbeam, in that long frock of silvery crepe chiffon, through which here and there gleamed a bright panel of blue charmeuse.

Monica came a little closer and, for a moment, as if shy, tickled behind a furry ear Kallikrates, who sat upon the desk. The cat swelled voluptuously under the caress, hunching up the mossy gold of his shoulder against that thin hand, like a spray of fern, with the finger nails of sepia pink. "Father," said Monica at last, "I want to go into munitions."

"You — oh, what put that into your head?"

"Well, I want to do something."

"Yes, I quite see." Sir Hugh was embarrassed; he realised that Monica should do something, but now that she wanted to, an old instinct dictated that no Oakley girl ever did anything, cried out against the rape of war. So he temporised.

"I quite agree with you; everybody who can do anything ought to. Still — it's very hard work, you know, and — er — there are other things."

"What sort of things?"

"Well, the girls are rather rough."

"Do you think they would be nasty to me?"

"No, of course not. Quite good sorts, I'm sure, but not exactly your sort."

"It takes all sorts to make a war," said Monica, smiling.

Sir Hugh sighed. Yes, indeed. But still the instinct bade him struggle. "Couldn't you do something else?"

"What else could I do, Father?"

"Oh, I don't know. There are such lots of things a girl can do now, canteens or — er, Red Cross depots want people. Perhaps you might even get into a government office. There might be room in the Board at Ashford." Monica bent forward suddenly and kissed him on the forehead.

"Dear old Daddy!" she murmured. "What a schemer

you are. Here you are trying to tie me up in Ashford because it's only half an hour away, and you don't know you're doing it. You want me to do something real, but you'd like me to do it at Knapenden, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I would," said Sir Hugh with sudden courage. "I'm a silly old man, Monica, and like all silly old men, I'm making a fool of myself over a young girl. But, seriously, do you really want to do this? You've done other things."

"Oh, yes, I know. Last year I worked at the relief centre. But all the Belgians have had all their babies; at least, I hope so. Anyhow, they've mostly gone north to become profiteers."

"Well, you help me quite a lot."

Monica smiled and counted on her fingers: "(1), to have answered seventeen letters saying that the matter will have urgent consideration (which it hasn't); (2), to have driven father every morning into Rye (and twice into a ditch); (3), to have taken part in the economy campaign at Rye (and felt so exhausted that I had to ask another economiser to lunch at the 'Mermaid' and spent eleven-and-three)."

Sir Hugh laughed. "No, you don't sound lucky but — I insist on being serious. Do you really want to work eight hours a day? And get your fingers stained with T. N. T.? And wear a mob cap and trousers?"

"Trousers!" said Monica raptly. "Father, you've lost your case. It was only when women began to wear trousers that men said women were splendid. How very vain of them! Father, you've done it. And now that you are down I will leap upon you and finish you. Your Board of Control is in touch with all sorts of munition works. You know Mr. Irvine, the manager, very well. You've been seen lunching with important personages

at the 'Bull.' I have reason to think that lots of them will be pleased to oblige you by engaging a new hand called Oakley."

"Oh, dear, oh, dear," murmured Sir Hugh. "How very different you are from the girls I used to know! In my time the young generation never grew old."

"That's what happened to you, Daddy. But now for it! Take a nice, clean sheet of paper and write a letter to somebody, and give it to me to post because you're quite young enough to be a deceiver, and, if you please, I'll post it myself."

"Monica," said Sir Hugh peevishly, "I won't be hustled."

"Don't be selfish; you've been having an awfully good time during this war."

"What!" cried Sir Hugh indignantly.

"Yes, you have. When the war broke out you had retired from the bank; you had nothing to do; yes, I know you attended sessions, and looked after the County Council's money, say twopence a year, and you wrote papers for the Institute of Bankers, so called because no bankers attend its meetings — but now! You've been all over the country recruiting hard, and there wouldn't have been a Derby scheme in Sussex but for you, and you've organised dozens of committees for the Belgians, and the Serbians, and the sailors, and the washerwomen who have seen better days; you've founded three kitchens, two hospitals and you . . ."

"Spare me!" cried Sir Hugh. "Go away, or I'll set the cat at you."

"Please, Father, a clean sheet of paper."

"No, no, no, not to-night. Leave the room, Miss," and as Monica sat down on his desk Sir Hugh jumped up, seized her by her silken waist and proceeded to drag

her out of the room. There was a fierce struggle during which cushions were thrown, a pile of blue books overset. At last, laughing and panting, Sir Hugh closed the door upon a creature that banged and kicked the panels, loudly shouting: "Votes for women!"

When the noise subsided Sir Hugh came back and induced Kallikrates to show the blunt end of his nose from under the bookcase, whence he at last came out, dragged by neck and tail, in a filthy condition, and looking as if he thought the war would last seven years. Sir Hugh for a long time remained seated at his desk. He was very undecided. He tried to return to his work, took up a letter from Stephen, a queer, horrible letter where the boy described with a sort of gusto how a German attack had been broken by machine-gun fire:

"You should have seen them come up. They had to cross a little rise, and then every line was like a grey wave coming right out of the ground. And all the machine guns were trained on that rise. Just for a moment you saw a wave, and as the guns swept from left to right the wave crumbled away from left to right, like ninepins knocking each other down, and as one wave fell you could see another one form behind it and fall away while a third one arose. It was a ripping morning except that my batman couldn't find the tin-opener."

Also they had caught a spy, and Stephen had had a long talk with him before they shot him. Queer sort of spy evidently, a London clerk who had taken up spying for the Germans because he liked making himself up with whiskers, and slinking round corners, and overhearing footsteps, as he called it. Adventure!

"Funny sort of chap. He said to me: 'You're a gentleman, you don't understand. You don't know what it's like, nine till six every damned day of your life. And

saying "Sir." And being rowed if you take more than an hour for lunch. And knowing you're just a bit of dirt. And then some one comes along and says to you: "Look here, my fine fellow, wouldn't you like to be a sporting cuss? The sort you see on the movies, or in those books on the bookstalls by William le Queux." Saving your country or doing it down, it's much the same; whenever you save one country you do down another. And being patted on the back by generals, and having dreams about getting out of palaces through the drains. That's life!'"

Then Stephen had broken off, saying: "I don't know why I tell you all this. I'm making up half of it, I suppose. I must have been reading R. L. Stevenson, or that sort of romantic tripe."

But all through Sir Hugh was haunted by that vision of his long, slim daughter in an overall, with her finger nails worn close, her soft cheeks touched with dermatitis, and the infinitely sweet thing that fluttered within her coarsened. A rebellious rage rose in him. Must war then take them all? Young men and young girls? To slay them or scar them? Must indeed war breathe upon their star and detach their wings? He slept ill, rose a little after dawn and walked along the ridge to Udimore copse where all was grey and lonely. On this soft morning of late February the birches were still bare, but some patches of silver bark shone like soiled mirrors. Over the marsh the sun was breaking in the dun mist; he saw it rise weary and pale from the eastern downs, lazily, as from a lover's bed. Already, something of spring was in the air; the primroses that in another month would cluster so eagerly that here he would not dare tread, were shooting out little green leaves still moist with birth. A sweet, wet smell rose from the thawing earth. He was

in the midst of life, that rebelliously rises even from graveyards. It comforted him to feel this. He thought: "Yes, I suppose she must go. She will come back, come back as surely as next year, happen what may in that insignificant thing they call the great world, just as will the daughters of the primroses which now lie concealed under my feet."

For a moment he gave way to a favourite amusement, for Sir Hugh was a true male and still very much an old half blue and an old volunteer officer: in his mind he landed troops on the east side of the Rother, threw his sappers and their bridges across the dykes, stormed Winchsea Hill and crowned it with machine guns — and he manœuvred his forces, cavalry dismounting, infantry digging themselves in beside the hedges. He smiled as he thought of his heavy howitzers safely concealed in the valley, well beyond Brede.

And, swinging his stick, in the morning that shone and the sun that beat into his eyes from the yellow ridge road, too conscious of warm light and moist life to feel the misery that lives between four walls, he walked away towards Knapenden whistling: "The British Grenadiers."

VIII

Monica leant out of her sitting-room window. A little exultation was upon her. *Her* sitting-room window, hers, her own, her first. She occupied the first floor of a large house in Castle Hill, Rochester. Before her stood the grey, ruined castle, clad with ivy about its middle, like some old, weary gladiator in a leopard skin. But she thought little of the old steeple, or of the brown Medway which lay before her, riven by little wharfs, of crowding Strood, across the bridge, or the swelling downs that

rolled away towards the west. In that moment her youth was all egotism. She had flung off the mood of the morning, when she had felt for Sir Hugh who had insisted on taking her to Rochester himself, but didn't like to tell her how unhappy he was. Instead of that he had brutally abused the pacifism of President Wilson, used words such as coward and hypocrite which were unusual in his mouth. He had declaimed against the Admiralty because the *Arethusa* was sunk, conjured up awful perils: "Here's Austria streaming through Montenegro; it'll be Albania next, and then Greece; we can't stop them. And there's Verdun. Douaumont came down yesterday.

"The French are cracking up. They'll rat. I feel it in my bones, they'll rat. And we don't move. We talk of our offensive and we don't move."

For one moment Monica thought of him, and then he was expelled by the infinitely more vivid first day at the Cottenham Works, by the exciting experience of eight hours in a real munitions works, among real explosives. It had all been so lovely and dangerous, and exciting, being searched for keys and knives, and the funny felt shoes in which her feet waggled, and all those posters about cleaning your teeth, and not eating your food with soiled hands. "Poison!" she whispered to herself, and with an exquisite childish pride she held up to the fading light fingers upon which already rested a thin film of yellow stain.

IX

Outside the King's Arms, on this moonless March night, darkness was complete. Along the drawn blinds showed only narrow strips of light. So Mr. Barry felt his way in and for a moment stood dazed as he entered

the misty brightness of the hot tap room. Half a dozen men sat on the rough benches before tall tankards of ale. There were little pools of beer on the sanded floor. And much smoke rising from the short pipes. A little hoarse laughter and not much talk. "Hullo, here's Tom!" said a voice, "What's yours, old cock?"

Mr. Barry went to the bar to give his order to Mr. Cashel, who stood in his customary attitude, polishing a glass with a piece of chamois leather, an unexpectedly neat and respectable little man. Not far off stood one of the seven Misses Cashel. Mr. Cashel's daughters had been planned by Providence to supply a barmaid every day of the week, though signs of the times suggested that very soon the seventh day might require no Hebe. (There was little danger that male enterprise would upset the Providential scheme. One had only to consider the Misses Cashel to understand that temptation does not lurk everywhere; few were the chances that any of them would forsake the bar for the altar rail.)

Mr. Barry joined the men at the table, Mr. Hart, of Ascalon Farm, and Mr. Abbey, the draper, who, though a leading tradesman, could afford to frequent the King's Arms because he was a bachelor and a dog. With them sat Port, who farmed Ballagher's, while at the very end of the room, at another table, sat three old labourers, furrowed with age and crusted with earth, who sucked their clay pipes, nodding a little over their tankards, their ears respectfully open to the conversation of their superiors. It was not much, this conversation, for all knew that in a village everything one says is to-morrow known to everybody, and so when Port asked Mr. Barry how the cycle shop was going, he expected nothing more than the defensive reply:

"Sold a penn'orth of tintacks to-day."

If Mr. Barry had replied otherwise he would have feared that somebody would raise his rent.

And still Mr. Cashel polished that tumbler with chamois leather. After a moment the guarded conversation was resumed.

"I'm glad I ain't got a son," said Hart. "A girl's trouble enough, but in these days if you've got a son and want to stick to him it's as if you'd burgled a church. Though when I come to think of it, girls . . ." He was a very large, red man, with cheeks that hung a little on his soiled linen collar. He did not look like the prosperous farmer he was, but more like a bankrupt bookmaker who has taken to backing horses.

"Well," said Port, "let 'em say, that's what I say; let 'em say. My boys ain't going."

"Will you march too or wait till March 2?" asked Mr. Abbey, with an air of infinite doggishness. Mr. Port brought his fist down upon the table; his fine eyes shone, and his short grey beard seemed to stick out with intensity.

"They ain't going to march. Dammun! I say, they ain't going. Farm wants 'em and farm'll 'ave 'em, that's what I say."

"It's all very well, Mr. Port," said Barry, "but you've got to think of the country."

"I *am* thinking of the country," said Mr. Port. "Ain't this the country? The country wants men. Well, we've got the men and we'll damn well keep 'em. I'm going to appeal, that's what I'm going to do, and they can say what they like. Let 'em say, that's what I say."

For a moment debate seemed imminent, and the three old labourers, holding their pipes high, stared at their masters seriously, as if they were being educated in the problems of the day.

Then Mr. Cashel was appealed to. "Well, gentlemen," he said (polish, polish), "of course we've got to get the men. Nobody says we can do without the men. We've got to win this war. But, of course, the land's got to be looked after. We've got to get the men for the land too. I'm glad to think that some have gone already. But, of course, some have got to stay."

"'Ear, 'ear," said a small, sandy man who was sitting alone. And after a moment's hesitation a chorus of "'ear, 'ear" arose. It was felt that Mr. Cashel had ideally expressed the intermediate position, and that nobody need hesitate to enter his public house on account of his views. But Mr. Keele, a rather bitter-looking man with grey side whiskers and the air of a methodist so common in this corner of Kentish Sussex, spoke:

"It's all very well your talking, all of you. Your boys like the land. Not like my fine la-di-da gentleman. He don't want to stay. Gadding and gallivanting in Hastings, that's more like it. Just like the others. The last and the worst."

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Hart, with a grin, "'e wants to drive a moty car, don't 'e? 'E's to be an engineer, ain't 'e? 'E'll be a gemmun yet, you take my word."

"Surelye," said Mr. Keele bitterly, his emotion such that from the prevailing cockney speech he dropped for a second into Sussex. He seemed to find it difficult to speak; he could not express how much it outraged him that he, the fifth Keele to control Stoat's Farm, should see his children flee to the cities. His three daughters had married and left him; the elder son was a shopman in Boxhill; now the younger was going the way of his flesh. He could not restrain it. "I'm ashamed when I thinks of it," he said.

"Cheer up!" said Hart suddenly, enormously slap-

ping him on the shoulder with a fat red hand. "Cheer up, you'll get sugar in heaven if you don't get it here. And they'll sell it you without your buying a gallon of paraffin."

There was laughter, in the midst of which the little sandy man, the village cobbler, whose name was Farcet, was heard to ask whether there was any news.

"News be damned," said Port, expressing the county feeling towards the war. "What I want to know is this. They're setting up a tribunal, and they say Squire's chairman. Well, is 'e going to stand up for the land? That's what I want to know."

"Of course 'e'll stand up for the land," said Hart; "'e's a good un."

"Sir Hugh's an excellent landlord," said Mr. Cashel judicially.

Mr. Hart gulped down his beer and turned on Cashel with a certain savagery of admiration. "A good un! A damn good un. Known 'im forty years, I 'ave: they don't breed that sort nowadays. Why, I remember, I was a nipper then, in '77 it was. I remember it as if it was yesterday. The old Squire, Sir James, he was alive then. This young feller, he was coming along the lane to the farm. I remember 'e was fourteen then, same as me, out for a holiday from his fine school, Eton-and-Oxford they called it, I think. Well, I was just rushing out of the gate, and I caught 'im as 'e was turning the corner — plump in the belly. 'E picks 'imself up an' looks at me, not red as you might think, but greeny white, 'e was that angry. 'Beg pardon,' I sez. 'Beg pardon what?' sez the young feller. 'Beg pardon,' I sez. 'Beg pardon *Sir*,' sez 'e. 'Go to 'ell,' sez I. 'E sez nothing, and fetches me a clip on the ear, I can feel it now. Gord! we 'ad a warm five minutes. I shoved

'im into the ditch and I called 'im everything I knew, and 'e'd 'ave done the same, but 'e 'adn't learned the words at 'is fine school. 'E broke a tooth for me, 'e did."

"And who won?" asked Farcet, suddenly. The fat man laughed.

"Well, I suppose 'e won, if me being chucked into the manure means anything. But 'e picked me up, and 'e wiped most of the muck off and shook 'ands. 'E's a gemmun, dammun!"

"Aye, he's a gemmun."

"Ah," said Hart, "wish I'd 'ad a boy like 'im instead o' Molly. Oh, she ain't a bad un, but you gets kind o' sick o' ribbons and scented soap, and young fellers sending valentines from the railway yard at Ashford."

"Don't you worry," said Hart, "you won't be bothered with 'er long."

"What do you mean?" said Hart.

The table laughed with an air of secretive sensuality. Then Farcet said: "It don't do to talk, but they say there'll be wedding bells soon at Ascalon."

Mr. Hart laid upon the table two enormous fists and said: "If it's that Cradoc you're talking of — if you think that she's going ter 'ave *'im* — jgrrr — I'll rive the guts out of 'im."

"Won't be difficult," said Keele. "Wot's it 'e calls 'imself? Conscientious objector, ain't it? You'll tan 'im as easy as Squire tanned you."

"I'll tan 'im as easily as I'd tan you, Keele," replied Hart, "but there, that sort don't need tanning; tarring and feathering, that's more like it."

"'Ear, 'ear," said Port. "It's not as if 'e was on the land. 'Oo wants grocers? My boys ain't conscientious objectors, but somebody's got to look after the farm."

Mr. Farcet held to the subject as if it fascinated him.

"What's going to happen to 'im, do you think?" he asked.

"He'll go up before the Tribunal," said Barry, "and tell 'em 'e wouldn't kill a slug 'cos it's all God's beautiful life."

"And wot'll the Tribunal say?" asked Farcet.

"Oh, I dunno. Smack 'im on the cheek and see if 'e turns the other. Squire's chairman, and I'll be sorry for Cradoc when Squire's done with 'im."

"Well," said Mr. Cashel, "you know a man may be a conscientious objector; it's the law."

"The law's the law," said Mr. Keele, "and a conscientious objector, 'e's — 'e's a louse." There was a little silence, and Barry said:

"Well, after all, why should he go? I'd go if I could, but who's to run the ironmongery?"

"Same here," said Abbey. "You don't want to 'ave to go into Rye to buy a pair of socks."

"No, to be sure," said one of the old labourers, though what this applied to was not clear. For a moment nobody said anything; the pipes smoked slowly. The countryside was meditating over this problem: Why should Cradoc go? Why should anybody go? Go to a place nobody's ever heard of. Ah! if the Germans came to Sussex it might be different. "If 'e comes near my girl," Hart summed up, "I'll rive 'is guts out." But there was no echo. It was as if the profound thoughts of the countrymen, that range no further than the sky line, and embrace every detail within its curve, were fastened upon the sense of community within that little space, which forbade Cradoc to join the army, just as it forbade young Keele to make for the garages of Hastings. For a moment the talk wandered away from these dim connections with the war. They talked of the funny

gardening in Villa-Land, of the absurd townsmen who already were sowing beans and broccoli, so that the spring rains might duly rot their seeds.

"That sort," said Keele, "they dunno what top-dressing is. They puts in onions in soft clay just as they might put roses. Dig! That sort can't dig. See 'em run their drills by each other; you couldn't lay your hand between two rows."

Thicker and thicker hung the smoke. Oaths and threats rose up as the probable maximum prices of meat were discussed. Mr. Cashel still polished and listened; sometimes one of the old labourers gravely nodded his head with an air of intellectual enlightenment.

X

March was passing. As waves successively breaking on the shore, but ever rising, the Germans drew closer to Verdun. One day a fort still flew a battered tricolour, for a moment maintained tradition against experience, revived in isolated gallantry the prejudice of glacis, scarp and counterscarp, then fell, was a dot, a name, a shadow merged within the greater shadow of the field greys. They came on, the field greys, under shrapnel, decimated by machine-gun fire, mined a division at a time in woods, like a tide creeping into rocky channels, rising about unconquered bluffs. The black line on the newspaper maps twisted as a tortured serpent closer about tiny villages, tiny as Troy and as epic, until their names, Vaux, Cumières, shone red as beacons in the straining strife. Through a smoke cloud they were glimpsed, pawns of fate, toys of a press that enthroned them, frail barriers against the guns which already poured flame into the streets of Verdun, a press full of hint, apology, explana-

tion, galvanised to cry only "Hold out!" to reassure by promise . . .

God! that offensive of ours, will it never start?

And ringed about by a foul Eastern river, stinking with mud and corpses, cut off as Gordon in Khartoum, Townshend in Kut, penned in as a wild boar at bay that can only foam and bristle, preparing the daily miracle of the sun, by raising among men that shambled with fever-leaded feet, filthy with sores, crawling with vermin, the standard of the forgotten St. George . . .

XI

Sir Hugh fled rather than went to town. He had nothing to do there; indeed he ought on that Wednesday to have attended a sitting of the Board of Control, but the feeling which in October of the previous year had led him to shut up Connaught Square and lock himself up at Knapenden, far from placards, shouting newsboys, urgent telephones, tape machines, had a way of reversing itself and of driving him up to town. It was as if the old war fever lay dormant in his blood, and now and then broke out. He was feverish that day, for the agony of Verdun followed him close, its shadow hanging over the train, as if some flying roc cast over him the black aura of its wings. So he was glad to find Charing Cross so busy, like an ant hill stirred; the Strand was extraordinarily full of young men in khaki, excited girls, middle-aged and elderly people who seemed to have rediscovered something to do. It was still winter in London on this March morning; he missed the rising scent of spring, so strong already in Udimore Copse, but in a way spring was expressing itself in the women's faces, little rosy

animals nestling in furs. As he walked up Pall Mall he felt that so vivid a generation could not die.

In another way this was borne out a little later when he entered the Mausoleum Club where he was to lunch with Angus Cawston. There was something so solid and certain about his brother-in-law; like Lady Oakley he was full of thick life, which contrasted with Sir Hugh's fine nervousness; because Cawston was large, square, heavy, he had for Sir Hugh something of the physical attraction which had flung him, a little fearful but enraptured, into Lady Oakley's strong arms.

Cawston took charge of him in a businesslike way; in a sense he hung up his visitor's hat. Things went with a swish. Sir Hugh was shepherded up the vast staircase into the dining room with the colonnaded front: if the Mausoleum had been Sir Hugh's own club, even so Cawston would have ordered the lunch. He talked a great deal during lunch.

"We aren't getting on with this war. Oh! I don't mean only out there; we can't do anything about that, we civilians. It's here I mean. We're just slacking along, half-doing things, or pretending we are. War isn't a tea-party, as Bernhardi says. Look at the German banks."

"They're winding them up," said Sir Hugh, "aren't they?"

"Winding them up!" said Cawston bitterly, "we're giving the key one turn a week. That's how we wind up the German banks. I went into the Deutsche Bank yesterday — full of Huns, great, fat, prosperous Huns. They're not worrying about their jobs. They know their bank won't be wound up by the time we've wound up the watch on the Rhine. Hugh, it makes me sick. Everything makes me sick. Look at the blockade! The

other day we let through eighteen hundred tons of rubber because they were going to Sweden. But, good God! Sweden hasn't used eighteen hundred tons of rubber since she was born."

"I quite agree with you," said Sir Hugh, "but Sweden's neutral. Even if she is trading with Germany, we can't help it."

"Stop the goods."

"Yes, stop 'em, if you can show they are going to Germany. But you can't stop goods to a neutral."

"Don't have beef, try the cold saddle; the Mausoleum prides itself on its saddle. What were you saying? Oh! about neutrals. Well, we can't be bothered with neutrals. We've got to ration 'em, and if we don't let 'em have quite enough they won't be able to sell anything to Germany. Oh! I know," he went on, suppressing Sir Hugh, "I know your ideas about fair play, and they're all very well in the ordinary way, but this is war, man! war! We can't be quixotic about it. Neutrals must suffer; serve them damn well right for being neutrals."

Sir Hugh smiled. "You mean serve them damn well right for being little neutrals. You wouldn't try it on the U. S. A., would you?"

Cawston made a broad gesture, and for a moment Sir Hugh wondered why he liked him so, this heavy clubman with the fleshy cheeks, tight collar, cross-barred cravat, eyeglass grafted under the heavy eyelid, hogged reddish moustache, all complete. So like Lena, with his dark red hair; that must be it. While Sir Hugh was thinking, Cawston escaped the awkward question.

"They'll be all right by and by. This war is touching up their moral feelings no end; and when a moral man is properly touched up, he makes a first-class murderer. They may be too proud to fight, but they'll get

shoved into it sooner or later. Look at this fodder business. David has it from the Controller himself: four thousand bales of hay from the States were lying at Southampton. If we'd been able to unload them it'd never have come out, but we didn't, and after a while the hay got heated and we had to put the fire out. And what did they find when they went down to see the damage? Thousands and thousands of little steel hooks, scattered all through that hay. Kill every horse that ate it. And after that you tell me we've got to talk of fair play!"

Sir Hugh was silent: he was a country gentleman, and somehow it shocked him more to think of horses with their entrails stabbed by steel hooks than if this had been done to men.

He did not say much more during the meal, for a little grey man, whose name Sir Hugh never surprised, joined them. He found himself listening to the conversation around him.

"We've got to give it 'em hot and strong," said the grey man, "reprisals all the time, that's the only way. Look at that seaplane raid on Walmer. What's Walmer? Saturday afternoon excursion. Well, we've got to give it 'em back. Drop a few bombs on Cologne, town for town, and ton for ton."

"Tit for tat," whispered some irreverent spirit in Sir Hugh's mind. "He is quite right, though . . ."

"They talk of frightfulness," said Cawston. "Well, they know their business. We can give 'em a bit of frightfulness. Pity we didn't start it."

"Yes," said the grey man. "We're getting out a new bomb, you know. Said to be prussic acid mostly. Funny stuff: it makes you jump into the air and tie yourself into knots."

Unreasonably Sir Hugh smiled. It was a comic way of killing.

"The way you describe it," he said, "makes me think of the old riddle: What is the difference between the manner of death of a hairdresser and a sculptor? You know, the hairdresser curls up and dyes, while the sculptor makes faces and busts."

They laughed all three. Cawston brought the conversation back to reality by asking whether the Southern Board of Control was at last supplying the nets for submarine fishing. And for a time the conversation became fantastic: submarines were being fished for, like shrimps; Cawston and the grey man both knew somebody whose friends had seen them lying in dozens in Portsmouth graving-dock. The talk wandered, as they went to the smoking room, to the difficulty of enlisting submarine crews.

"It won't matter now," said Cawston, "now that we've got compulsion. Get all the men we want. At least we shall soon. 'Single men first' won't last."

At this stage Sir Hugh noticed that the grey man looked meditative. Over coffee and liqueurs the discussion was confined to the coming general compulsion.

"We've got to have it," said Cawston. "Before we've done with this job every man will have to go. Every man up to forty."

Sir Hugh found himself putting in a plea for the land.

"Oh! the land must look after itself," said Cawston. With a sense of ignoble detail, he added: "We must paddle along as best we can. It's no good favouring the land, or we'll have no land left to favour."

A vein of sentiment appeared in him:

"When I think of Belgium and France all torn and burnt, and of all that country round Knapenden with

the villagers sitting down to their pots of beer in the oast-houses . . ."

"They don't sit in the oast-houses," said Sir Hugh.

"Well, anyhow, it's all very picturesque, and all the little English villages nestling in the dells, it makes me think — oh, well — you know. Ah! if I had a son I'd be proud to give him to his country."

"Yes," said Sir Hugh, slowly, "I've got a son. I know."

Then the little grey man bent forward confidentially and said:

"I was thinking while you were telling us about the Board of Control. I agree with you that compulsion all round is a matter of months. Now my son is managing a motor business. He's doing very well, but he couldn't very well attest. It wasn't much good. You see the business couldn't spare him. He's starred. Only — if we're going to have compulsion all round, it strikes me," and his voice filled with patriotic solemnities, "that he ought to do something. I wonder whether the Board of Control could find something for him. First-class business man, knows all about cars. Of course, it's very awkward for the business, but still in these days, I'm sure you agree with me, he ought to do something."

Sir Hugh vaguely promised to see what he could do. He had not yet attained a condition of irony, and so saw no opposition between the grey man's paternal ambitions and the rumbling talk of reprisals and spreading destructions which issued from his lips. He left the Club a little later.

"Good-bye, Angus. How's Genevieve?"

"Doing fine; she is in the Women's Emergency Corps, drill, canteen work at Woolwich half the night; it's making another girl of her. Jolly good for girls, all this;

it's hauling 'em out of all that shopping and fashions. Bringing them up against things, you know. We'll get a better type of girl all round. I shouldn't wonder if after the war we got a nobler and purer kind of domestic life."

"I wonder," thought Sir Hugh as he went along Pall Mall. The countryman's eyes were open to differences. There were many girls in uniform, W. E. C's, V. A. D's, nurses, girls dressed up to look like Serbian vivandières, or something equally incredible, Government office girls with bobbed hair, a touch of lip salve, and a following airman. Excited, busy-looking crowd. Not much hate there. What a lark the war was! Then Sir Hugh began to reproach himself: "After all, how am I taking the war?" He thought himself inadequate in hate. Never would he attain the sacred fervour of Cawston, the little grey man, his own wife, anybody. War was a beastly job you had to do. Could not one do it decently? Had we like the Homeric heroes to stand in front of each other and call one another filthy names before fighting? Fight and win, or fight and lose, and shake hands and be damned to it. They were not taking it like that, any of them. All this talk about annexing Mesopotamia, and bagging Egypt, and handing over Trieste to the Italians, and boycotts, and snatching ships — it was all quite sound, quite fair, but how was it being done? Not by cool judges, but by a nasty little crowd of plaintiffs clawing for damages. No tournament this, but an international bargain sale.

The impression hung heavily upon him all that day. Piccadilly upset him; there was a Flag Day going on. And a girl ogled him as she pinned on his flag. He asked her what the proceeds were for, and she didn't quite know. At his own club, the Gadarene, lost in the

augustnesses of St. James's Street, he listened for a while to the conversation in the billiard room. He did not know the men; apparently they had started with a debate on: "Was it pronounced 'VERDAIN' or 'VERDOON'?" Instances of other French words were given. Logic was invoked. Wipers was derided. Etymology waxed hostile. The balls clicked, somebody swore. Gloomily fell the afternoon light. "Hard lines," said somebody. Now etymology passed into reminiscences of a phantom, Old Chips, a one-time classical master of Marlborough. It wandered from Old Chips to memories of fagging, to scrapes when out of bounds. An Etonian vowed that Neuve Chapelle had been messed on the historic playing fields.

Sir Hugh listened sympathetically, but disturbed. He understood all this. Those were his memories too, but for many years he had been thinking of other things, politics, finance, land and roads, all that sort of thing. His school days seemed further back than those of his contemporaries. Strange creatures, these men of fifty, that find in port the satisfaction they used to find in tuck; that love golf as once they loved footer; that have given up Henty and Ballantyne in favour of Blackwood and "The Winning Post"; that keep horses instead of pet white mice, that are all having, getting, contesting, that are as pleased when they attain a K. C. B. as they liked being made a prefect. Schoolboys! Eternal schoolboys! but schoolboys in office, soldiers, civil servants, lawyers, minds that are as they were, but in charge of things that can crush, and hurt, and wilt, men not grown up, yet sticking by sheer weight to the surface of a world that whirls them where it lists. Up against a war like this, men like this. Men capable only of seeing to-day, bound to be surprised by to-morrow, concerned with

atrocities more than with the impulses which underlie atrocities, with revenge rather than with adjustment. And Sir Hugh tried to formulate the thoughts that inspired him in the pursuit of similar ends, so that his effort might have afflatus, something that one might call the war creed of a gentleman. Something like this:

"I believe in God the Father, in His Representative, Jesus Christ, and in His Metaphor, the Holy Ghost. His relative, the Virgin, I have decided to omit. His Saints I tolerate; their chairman, St. George, I respect because he is royally appointed to Me.

"I believe in the gentlemen of England.

"I believe in times of peace that my dominance is founded on the Latin grammar and the Greek alphabet, on cricket and football; on beef, on port and sherry, on the House of Lords, on the pre-Bathurst *Morning Post,* and the pre-Northcliffe *Times,* on my father; on his father.

"I believe that in times of war my code of peace must be maintained. I believe that war must be waged in accordance with the rules of the game, that no weapon may be used that has not been used before; thus I may not use gas, liquid fire, aeroplane darts, nor may I bombard open towns, or torpedo merchant ships; but I may use swords, bayonets, rifles, guns (light, heavy and machine), pikes, battering-rams, bows and arrows, flint axes.

"I believe that though my enemy uses unlawful weapons, I may not imitate him. If he so do and prevail, then according to the rules of the game, though victorious, he shall be deemed to have lost it.

"I believe that spying and the opening of letters may not be practised by me, for these are against the rules of the game.

"I believe that I may not interfere with the enemy's commercial and industrial activities, for this is outside the game. Moreover, I am not fully aware that such activities exist.

"I believe that I may not seduce the enemy's subject peoples, or foment discontent among his labouring class, for it is beneath me to treat with vassals; also I am not fully aware that the labouring class exists.

"I believe that no harm may be done to the enemy's wounded, his women, children, aged, or sick. If the enemy act otherwise, then he has broken a rule of the game, and though victorious shall be deemed to have lost it.

"I believe that I owe all this to my own vanity, and that I am entitled to claim from myself everything except victory."

But such nebulous formulations, however exalting, did not reconcile him with London. London in wartime did not look as if it were practising a war creed of any kind. It was just shoving into omnibuses, and buying up chocolates in case they ran short. He had moments; one does not escape moments in London, for she is so large that in broad spaces like Whitehall her futilities take upon themselves an air of importance. Little men in Whitehall scurrying, very busy, all of them kings, even though only of Lilliput. One of those moments was the march past of a battalion of Scots Guards, great creatures spangled with barbarous tokens, big fellows with lovely knees carved out of brown marble. And their savage music made something rise and swell in Sir Hugh's throat. The bagpipes shocked him, as they do all Southerners; their wild melody, full of blood lust, full of mourning, struck him as indecent and violating, but in a sensual way he enjoyed this public violation of his emotions.

Still he was glad to go home. He felt the need to get away from the war, and it was this perhaps that led him to lunch with his uncle, Charles Oakley, who had retired into a small house surrounded by broad fields at the top of the hill east of Rye. Charles Oakley was very old, seventy-five, and in those days less interesting than he had been. All through his life he had provided Sir Hugh with perpetual interest, for the old man had once upon a time flaunted a wild and insolent youth at Cremorne, Vauxhall, Tortoni's, on every race course, wherever baccarat was played; he had known Napoleon III and been in love with Eugenie, worn very tight trousers with straps under his boots, and once upon a time, in Willis's, hidden under a lady's crinoline to escape the bailiffs. All through his youth and early manhood Sir Hugh had turned the pages of his uncle's scandalous chronicle, but now his memory was growing dim; he held on as well as he could to faded stories about Plon-Plon, and something vague about Randolph Churchill, which began with somebody called Guzzling Jimmy being thrown out of Mivart's — and the rest of the story disappeared.

Still there was Charles Oakley, permanent, eternal. In his retirement he produced his incredible house. For the old man had developed a mania for inlaying. One might be sure almost at any time of hearing from the hall the caressing whirr of his fretsaw. From the library interminably issued mahogany tables amazingly faked into Sheraton, inlaid trays, and difficult, incredible objects, such as towel horses inlaid in marqueterie. It was a bewildering house. It was so persistently inlaid that it twinkled. Sometimes Charles Oakley would meditatively look at the panelled walls and remark:

"One can't inlay oak, tk, no, one can't inlay oak."

It was a pity.

As Sir Hugh entered the house it was just time for lunch, and he thought with satisfaction of going afterwards into the library and congratulating the old man on some difficult performance, such as a Sheratonised boot-jack, or something equally strange. But when the time came, and he followed his uncle to the big room, he saw that times had changed. No longer were the great Dutch tables obtrusive: they were covered with vast war maps, dotted about with little flags. Without a word the old man sat down before the eastern France section, his red, stiff finger tracing, as if he loved it, the course of the Meuse. Sometimes he adjusted a little flag, or pulled it out and stuck it in again into the same hole. He had no reminiscence to-day, he lived only in the present; he smiled up into his nephew's face, delighted with this new toy — the War!

So, in greater loneliness, Sir Hugh walked all the way along the ridge, feeling that he must go home to greet his sister, Mrs. Marchmont. He tried to express to his wife a little of this sense of suspension, so strong in him that day. Lady Oakley, after kissing him and telling him he looked tired, seemed unable to understand the vague suggestion that his mind, not his body was tired.

"Dear old man," she said. "I wish I could get you sanatogen. But they've stopped it, you know; it's German." She looked at him anxiously. She still loved her old husband very dearly, and she understood him not a bit more than when they came together twenty-seven years before. Perhaps that was why she still loved him. But her incapacity to grasp in him the things he could not grasp himself filled Sir Hugh with a certain discontent. He still liked the feel under his arm of her broad, firm shoulder; he liked the heavy wealth of her red-brown hair. How extraordinarily good-looking she

still was at forty-five. "Dear old Lena," he murmured, then sighed, realising that emotion is not quite as good as understanding. He shook it off.

"Hetty's come, I suppose."

"Yes; she's in the drawing-room, simply champing for tea."

Sir Hugh laughed. He knew his sister's regular habits. To Mrs. Marchmont five o'clock tea meant five o'clock, and not five past five tea.

As soon as he sat down, Mrs. Marchmont, evidently stirred by the war, began a frontal attack upon the period she generally described as "The Times In Which We Live." Apparently she had nearly been knocked down by a motor car, this invention of the devil and the twentieth century.

"They ought to be put down. Put down!"

"Steady on," said Sir Hugh, "what about horses? Remember how you broke your collarbone in '81?"

Mrs. Marchmont took not the slightest notice. She was a little, spare woman, with beautiful hard hands, and an air of having been cut out by machinery and carefully French polished. Substantially, as tea was more and more delayed, she felt it necessary to state her point of view. Namely, she disliked radicals, labour men and socialists; Jews were abominable and Dissenters were worse, for anyhow the Jews had produced Mr. Disraeli; vegetarians were detestable; everybody ought to be vaccinated by force; anti-vivisectionists should be handed over to the doctors, so that the latter might demonstrate their humanity. She disliked the cinema. Poets should have their hair cut. And anyhow, poetry was not poetry until it was bound in morocco.

Sir Hugh enjoyed Hetty. Such a Protest! The whole of tea was occupied by stimulating objections from Sir

Hugh, who was exasperated into defending Cobden. Mrs. Marchmont ate abundantly, and drank so much tea that it evidently got into her head; she got to the point of clamouring for a Man to save England, a very advanced condition. Also she became angry because her brother seemed to think her funny, and she could not perceive what he thought funny, but just as Mrs. Marchmont declared that advertisement ought to be made a punishable offence and Sir Hugh lay back in his armchair giggling, the door opened to let in Lee, bearing a salver, his face with the considerable nose suggestive of disturbance.

As he closed the door, one after the other of the three looked at him. Lady Oakley's sentence suddenly stumbled and faded away: Sir Hugh convulsively grasped the two sides of the armchair, while Mrs. Marchmont became set and immovable. Upon the salver lay a telegram. The three sat staring at Lee as he came closer. In those days nobody sent telegrams. It wasn't fair to send telegrams. Everybody knew what they meant. Was Lee coming from miles away? He seemed so long. Together Lady Oakley and Sir Hugh felt: "Stephen is killed." Mrs. Marchmont thought: "Bob's gone!"

And still Lee, from that interminable distance, came striding towards them. All three were taut; each one knew that the blow must be his.

Then at last Lee handed the telegram to Mrs. Marchmont. The old lady did not tear it open. She sat up in her chair, rigid, looking at the others with defiance. "Well?" she seemed to be saying, "What of it?" Then, at last, very quietly, she opened the envelope, unfolded the paper and said aloud: "Missing, that's what it says, but Bob's gone!"

With a swift movement Lady Oakley went to the arm-

chair, and put her arms about her sister-in-law. Mrs. Marchmont gently pushed her aside.

"I think I will go upstairs, Lena," and without a tremor on her face, neither quickly nor slowly, she went out.

"By God!" murmured Sir Hugh, "she's game!" And suddenly a blush of self-hate and self-contempt rose in his cheeks; he realised himself as vile because he was so happy: it was not Stephen. Then he went across to his wife and softly stroked her hair. Lady Oakley's cheeks were trembling and she was pretending not to cry, dabbing angrily at her eyes, as if she hated her tears.

"It was forwarded from London," she said, foolishly.

"Don't cry," said Sir Hugh, "perhaps he's a prisoner."

"Oh, no!" said Lady Oakley. "Hetty's right, Bob's gone."

Suddenly she clasped her hands together, and once more the Wagnerian look came into her eyes.

"It's dreadful, but it's got to be . . . 'Who dies if England lives?'"

XII

THAT particular week-end was overhung by the uncertainty of Robert Marchmont's fate. One didn't speak of it, and Mrs. Marchmont painfully insisted on playing bridge on the Saturday night and coming down to tea on Sunday afternoon to entertain the Jesmonds, but one thought of nothing else. The house was full of youth, for Monica had come up from Rochester, looking older and more self-possessed, proud of her hands, yellow with T. N. T. up to the wrists. She adopted the spirit of fortitude that was about, made the table laugh falsely by describing the Club night at Cottenham Works.

"It isn't such a rag as you might think. We're too proper and genteel, and all the young men wore linen collars. We enjoyed ourselves under the protection of Miss Livingstone, who looks like a saint turned sanitary inspector. It's all so toney, as they say, programmes printed by the factory, pink silk cards, refreshments strictly non-intoxicating, lancers, but not kitchen, no depraved sitting-out . . ."

But she had to stop. She realised that what she was saying was forced, jaunty, jerky. It was impossible to talk of these things with fear behind them. Poor old Bob! What a fight she had had with him, when she was six and he was ten, because he had unfairly shared a peach. She could still remember with delight smashing the unfair half upon his right eye. She almost cried as she thought of it.

The Jervaulx couple was there too, Sylvia, beautiful and agitated, talking continually of committees that she must attend, munitions she must make, motors she must drive, and producing wherever she went a sensation of flurry. Sir Hugh watched her with surprise: her brilliant brown eyes, her thick red mane, the splendour of the broad body, made him think of Kallikrates, red cats both of them. But Sylvia was not as restful as Kallikrates. She bounded where he glided. And she went for her father:

"You ought to come up to town. There are lots of things you could do in town. Oh! I know, it's all very well" (she waved away the Board of Control), "I know you've got a job at Ashford, but you're not in the Middle of Things."

Sir Hugh was understood to say that when things were going round, the middle was the very place which moved least.

But Sylvia was not mathematical. She became rhapsodic. . . .

"In London there's always something doing. They're always setting up boards, calling up people, getting people to do things. Societies break up and amalgamate. It's exciting!"

Sir Hugh smiled.

"I'm too old to get excited, Sylvia. I do my little bit in the corner, just as you do your big bit in the middle."

Sylvia suspected that her father was laughing at her, so much so that she consulted her husband. She did not as a rule consult Andrew Jervaulx. She had married him rather hurriedly, after he told her that unless he got married, he didn't see when he was going to get any more leave, and couldn't she help him out? She had married him on that. She liked that brutal way of putting things, and she found a rather voluptuous pleasure in the coarseness of the young engineer with the stiff black hair and the chin like a shovel.

"Doing things?" said Jervaulx, "I dunno. I suppose you've got to mess about and keep yourself amused while I'm out there. Save the country as much as you like, old thing, so long as you let it alone when I'm on short leave."

"Andy, you're no patriot."

"Of course I'm no patriot; nobody's a patriot in this country, unless they're forty-one and haven't got to go. But for God's sake don't talk about patriotism; one gets out of the way of thinking of all that tommyrot out there: trying to find whisky, and inspecting the men's feet, that's the sort of thing that really matters."

"But the Empire," said Sylvia feebly.

"Damn the Empire.— Come here, old girl." The young man took Sylvia between thumb and forefinger by

the back of her thick white neck, and bending down her head with an air of cold resolution kissed her where the red curls clustered close. "You're a damn fine girl," he muttered thickly.

"What a brute you are, Andy," said Sylvia, with a soft laugh of surrender, as if her agitations were set at rest by the strong urgency of the man's singler mind.

And Lady Oakley tried to interest Mrs. Marchmont in the discussion which threatened to break up the Committee of the New Hospital at Rye. One party wanted a dashing staff nurse to cheer up the patients, the other felt that soldiers generally lived evil lives and should be brought into contact with some one who would prepare them for a better land. Lady Oakley aspired to something less mystical. What she really wanted was to appoint Louise Douglas, so as to please Sir Hugh. Mrs. Marchmont said nothing. She did not like Louise much, and it annoyed her that Lady Oakley should not understand why her husband loved Louise. But of course poor Lena was so blind; also she had not known Mrs. Douglas well. Mrs. Marchmont found her old dislike of Mrs. Douglas very helpful during that awful time: hatred is a fine antidote to grief.

Meanwhile Sir Hugh, on the Sunday afternoon, went with Louise along the Ridge towards Udimore. More than Monica, Louise gave him a sense of complete restfulness; she had her mother's white skin and almost black hair; she did not talk much; she had not Monica's gaiety, but when he tried to express himself to himself, to make somebody understand the hideousness of the world, she was just what he needed.

"You see, Louise," he said, his eyes fixed on the moist brown road, "we're hanging between victory and defeat, and nobody knows what defeat might mean. All this

sort of thing," he pointed at the marshes rolling away towards Winchelsea, "it's not that it's in the balance exactly. It's not the German flag I'm afraid of; somehow it's the new British flag. Do you understand?"

"No," said Louise. "Go on."

Sir Hugh tried to, but he could not explain very well. For a moment he wondered whether he could have explained to Louise's mother, the dead woman who had always seemed to understand, yet had refused herself to him. She had understood everything except how much he wanted her.

"I've just been to London," he said. "Six million screaming rowdies. Winning the war as if they were winning a sweepstakes. Oh! we're in a corner, we've got to fight, but, my God! why have we got to fight like rats? Don't you see, Louise, we're not trying to make anything out of this war—I mean a new order when there won't be any more war. It's revenge all the time, not justice."

"Vengeance is Mine!" said Louise gently. "Don't you think He meant justice?"

"I don't know what He meant," sighed Sir Hugh. "Perhaps it is all too long ago for anything He meant to mean anything now. Oh! never mind," he added desperately, "come down into the meadow and see the lambs."

Louise followed him without comment; she had the gifts of silence and acquiescence. They went among the lambs that leapt on their straight, woolly, wooden legs, like toys, and stared from afar with inquisitive eyes, and leapt away on springs, more than ever like mechanical toys, bleating, to the side of their large mothers. But all through the meadow one lamb followed them close, pitifully crying, for its mother was dead, and it was

being bottle-fed. It was willing to be stroked, and it stirred in Sir Hugh's throat that large thing which had risen when he heard the bagpipes, for between its cries the tiny beast tried to seize his finger and to suck it. In the midst of swooping death, the lamb was struggling to maintain its life.

XIII

Sir Hugh did not like these sittings of the Military Tribunal. So far he had attended two. It was vaguely disagreeable to sit at this green table, surrounded by half a dozen men who shared with him — was it the responsibility or the privilege — to tell these young men: "You must go out there. Whether you like it or not. Leaving behind your women, your businesses, your pleasures. Go out there, and be shot or mangled. We send you there. We stay here. We are forty-one. We are all right."

It seemed indecent, this dominance of age. Oh! yes, he knew; these young men came up to appeal; they were not a very attractive crowd or they would have gone long ago of their own free will. Shirkers mostly — but still, who could tell whether, if this war had broken out twenty years before, some of the members of the Tribunal might not themselves have stood before a similar tribunal, trying to get off? Perhaps only recruits should sit on these tribunals. Perhaps even no old men and no women ought to vote for peace and war.

And so, when that morning Sir Hugh hurried through the waiting room, he tried not to see the little crowd. There were only seven or eight of them, and three women. It was a horrible idea that these women would wait in that room, while their men went inside to be — sentenced.

He did not feel like the chairman of the Tribunal. A queer fancy for a short story passed through his mind; he thought of a magistrate, who, on Judgment Day, automatically made for the bench. And the Recording Angel kicked him into the dock.

There were no scruples inside. It was not a bad tribunal. In addition to Sir Hugh it comprised Colonel Macduff, long retired to Winchelsea and now happily dug-out, a steam baker, a big builder whose activities radiated from Rye to Hastings, and two country gentlemen. Not bad people any of them; the sort of people you find on a special jury, who do their best, and are not intolerably sure that their best is very much. As Sir Hugh looked down the list he saw the names of two Knapenden men. One was Port, claiming for two sons on occupational grounds, and Cradoc, conscientious objector.

The Tribunal was obviously excited about Cradoc, though it tried to be calm, in the English way. Colonel Macduff said: "Hum." The Military Representative remarked vaguely: "We'll soon put him through it," but the builder more crisply stated the excitement by remarking: "Well, Sir Hugh, I suppose we can make a start?"

It was not an interesting start. The first two claims were a Rye claim for one-man businesses, sound enough so far as those claims went, that is to say so far as a one-man business can be looked upon as anything save a ridiculous survival.

"Three months. With leave to apply again."

The men went out with a contented, clucking air, like a hen that has at last laid its egg.

There was more difficulty with the second case, that of a young man of twenty-two, a very pale, underfed,

ugly, pimply young man, who outlined in a shrill and rapid monotone those conditions of the poor which are incredible to the rich:

". . . My brother having joined up there's only me to look after my old mother; she's sixty-seven, so she can't get the old-age pension, and you can't leave her because she has epileptic fits, and she might fall in the fire, and my two sisters, they aren't married and not likely to be, because they're getting on, both of 'em, and one of them has varicose veins and fainting fits, and the other's been in trouble and I've got to keep her little boy too, delicate he was from the beginning, and his bowels never was right, and we have the doctor to him every week. We might manage with the panel, except I was out of work last winter, and I haven't quite worked off what I got in debt for, and . . ."

The Tribunal had to listen to the end which came only when the young man took breath. It was horrible, all this.

"When you think of lives like these," murmured Sir Hugh to Colonel Macduff, "one wonders whether it's worth while giving them exemption; it seems they might as well be dead. Still, everything wants to live, I don't know why."

"Humph," said the Colonel, "by the look of him he won't make much of a soldier. Let's give him three months and see him again."

Sir Hugh nodded. After all, in three months the mother might have her final fit and simplify the problem; more likely, though, the sister would get into trouble again, piling giant responsibilities on rotten shoulders, bred rottenly, in a rotten system.

Port did not occupy them long. The handsome old farmer had obviously made up his mind to stand no

nonsense from the Tribunal. Vaguely he knew his power and meant to use it.

"It's like this," he said, sticking out his beard, "if you take my boy Jim, I've got to kill my cows. If you take Tom, I've got nobody to plough. If you take 'em both, I'll look after myself by running the market garden. It's as you think right, gentlemen. No boys — no milk, no barley, no roots. That's all I've got to say."

The Tribunal became thoughtful, for already the food scare had been made urgent by the ever more successful U-boat. The Military Representative thought it right to argue:

"It's all very well, Mr. Port. If everybody talked like you we shouldn't have an army at all."

"Very likely, sir," said the farmer. "Very sorry, sir, but if you want an army you've got to feed it. If you take my sons you get no food."

"Oh, nonsense, you can get other men, older men."

"Yes, sir, very likely, sir. Takes a strong man to drive a plough. I'm too old for it myself, sir. Take it you've done a bit of ploughing in your time."

The Military Representative, ex-Captain of the Volunteers and wholesale druggist, made a deprecating movement and murmured that a short exemption would not be opposed and that he would try to arrange substitution later. The Tribunal was greatly relieved when Port stumped out in his hobnailed boots, which seemed to trample on all these tom-fool demands of men who couldn't tell oats from nasturtiums. But the Tribunal was quietly quivering with excitement, for the next name was Cradoc. Their first conscientious objector, and they did not know how to deal with him. They had read reports in the newspapers showing the sort of questions one asked, but at bottom they were nervous.

"Those fellows," growled the Colonel, "argue the hind leg of a horse off."

And the steam baker murmured: "Now!" with an air of taking the high dive.

When, a moment later, Cradoc stood before them, his small thin figure rather defiantly erect, and a cool look in his eyes, the Tribunal was much more embarrassed than the appellant. There was a moment of hesitation. The Tribunal was not hostile, but it was so nervous that Colonel Macduff began by a crude remark, as is the way with very shy people:

"You're appealing on conscientious grounds, aren't you? It doesn't bother your conscience that other men should go and fight for you."

Cradoc did not reply, and the Tribunal stirred uneasily. After a moment of silence Sir Hugh thought it well to intervene.

"Mr. Cradoc," he said, "the grounds for your objection are of course not fully stated in your claim. Perhaps you will tell us exactly why you conscientiously object to entering an army."

"It isn't a very long story," said Cradoc. He pulled at his ragged black moustache. "I hold that all war is wrong and mistaken; that there is no such thing as a righteous war; that murder is murder, whether legal or not; that it is wrong to settle an international dispute by arms, just as it is wrong to settle a private quarrel by fists. The latter, gentlemen, is recognized by the British laws, which forbid two men to settle their dispute and compels them to come into court; my conscience, therefore, being a logical conscience, tells me that it is wrong for two nations to settle their private quarrel by force, and that they too must be prepared to come into court. If, therefore, I think it morally wrong that two nations

should fight, then I think it morally wrong that I should assist one of them to fight. Therefore, I conscientiously object to being enlisted in an army which is going to do something which I think wrong. That is my case, gentlemen."

The Tribunal hesitated for a moment. They were anxious to be fair, and they saw what Cradoc meant; what troubled them was that though they were inclined to agree with him, they thought he was wrong. There must be a trap somewhere. After a moment one of the country gentlemen said:

"Yes, I see your point. It's all very well in theory, that idea of not fighting, but it doesn't work out in practice."

"May I suggest that if a thing is right in theory it is right in practice? If a thing does not work out in practice it means that the theory is bad."

"We are not here to argue about practice and theory. The fact remains that your country is engaged in a life and death struggle with an unscrupulous and powerful enemy, and you ask us to believe that your conscience allows you to let other men go out and fight that enemy while you stay here in shelter. That is your position, is it not?"

"Yes, that is my position."

"That's a funny thing for your conscience to tell you, Mr. Cradoc."

"No. On Saturday afternoon hundreds of men from the country round here find themselves impelled to go to Hastings and get drunk. My conscience does not impel me to do anything but stay at home. I am what I am, an individual. Why should I do what the rest of the world does?"

"I don't think," said Sir Hugh, "that you can quite

detach yourself from your country like that. You are a British citizen, you must obey the laws."

"Yes, unless I am willing to pay the price of disobedience. If my conscience tells me that the law is a bad law, I am doing wrong if I obey."

"Oh, nonsense," said the builder suddenly. "We all obey laws we don't like."

"Not all of us. Sir Edward Carson and the Ulstermen didn't like Home Rule, even though an Act of Parliament was passed to enforce it. So they took arms to smash the law. General Gough and his officers at the Curragh said they would not enforce the law. The Suffragettes broke the law. The Trade-Unions broke the law. All these people were ready to suffer for it. They did what they thought right: why should I not do what I think right?"

"Now don't let's wander from the point," said the other country gentleman. "Let's look at things as they are. If we didn't raise an army we should be invaded by Germany and I suppose annexed. The British Empire would become a German colony."

"Yes."

"Is that all you have to say to such an idea? Have you no use for English liberty? for your home? your flag? your King?"

"No. I am what I am, a man. I happened to be born in Hastings; I might have been born in Pekin. I should still be what I am, whatever the colour of the bit of rag they call a flag which floated over my head," asserted Cradoc.

"Answer the question."

"I am answering, as well as I can. If the British Empire were annexed, I think that ploughmen would still plough your land, that I would still sell tea and sugar,

that the carpenter whose plane I can hear next door would still plane wood. The sunshine would still be sunshine whatever the flag."

The steam baker was impelled to come down to realities:

"You seem to think it would all be nice and easy being conquered. What about Belgium? What about towns being burnt down? What about scores of respectable shop-keepers like you being lined up against a wall and shot by the Huns? What about babies being pitched in the air and spitted on bayonets?"

"If people did not fight those things would not happen."

"But damn it all, man!" cried the Military Representative, "they do happen!"

"Then we must suffer them. I shall not give back life to a Belgian baby by killing a German father. We must do the best we can, and if we do not kill we take out of other men the impulse to kill. You think that by killing other men you will teach them not to kill you. It is wrong. All they do is to pull themselves together, get into a corner and plot, and take their revenge when they can. Revenge in turns, that has been the history of the world so far."

The Tribunal stared at this sickly, passionate man. It felt very discontented.

"Mr. Cradoc," said the steam baker, "try and think of these things happening to yourself. What would you do if a German soldier were to try and outrage your mother?"

"I should restrain him."

"By force?"

"Yes."

There was a stir of excitement round the table.

"By force, eh? I thought there would come a moment when your conscience would go pop."

The grocer looked at them with weary eyes. Could he make them understand?

"Gentlemen," he said, "I do want you to see what I mean. I would use force as a policeman uses force to preserve order. But I should not kill. Even to save my mother I may not kill, but I myself can be killed. Letting that alone, I say the enemy is only threatening my life as a soldier because he is afraid that I am threatening his, because his nation and my nation have started murdering each other, so that it all comes down to the first murderer being the one who gets off. If we don't threaten him, they won't threaten us."

"But!" shouted Colonel Macduff suddenly and rather angrily, "if everybody talked like you, there'd be no war."

Cradoc caught a faint smile on Sir Hugh's face. The Colonel had got hold of it pretty clearly, so clearly that Cradoc became ironic and replied:

"No, and that would never do."

Cradoc's position was not settled without some debate. While he was out of the room, the Tribunal, without being in any way converted, showed considerable divergence of opinion.

"The man's a shirker," said the Colonel. "It's all very well his talking! They all talk, that sort. Bernard Shaw, modern novels, all that sort of rot."

The Military Representative grew pressing on practical grounds.

"May I suggest, gentlemen, that you can't let everybody off."

The builder countered: "That's not the question. We let everybody off if we like," and bristled at the Military

Representative with an air of showing him that the civil power was still top dog.

As for the country gentlemen, they were silent, as they followed the argument with difficulty, but did not care to say so.

"It seems to me," said Sir Hugh, "that it all comes down to this: is the man's objection genuine, or not? We know his views, and for my part I think them ridiculous. I think with all of you that in an emergency like this a man must sink his individuality in the common task, that he must be ready to give up the privilege of individual conscience, and hand himself over to his country to whom he owes a duty of sacrifice greater than the privilege of freedom which he owes to himself."

"'Ear, 'ear," said the builder.

"Well," Sir Hugh went on, "we know from the papers before us that this man's objection is probably not made up to enable him to dodge military service. It seems that he has been a member of the Independent Labour Party for ten years; we know that the Socialist party has always taken this sort of line against war. Therefore the objection seems genuine."

"Socialist!" cried Colonel Macduff. "I didn't know the fellow was a Socialist."

"He was a member of the I. L. P."

"What's the I. L. P.?"

"Oh, never mind that," said the steam baker. "You know their motto: 'you share what you have with me and I don't share what I have with you.'"

Colonel Macduff took no further part in the debate beyond occasional detonations sounding something like: "Socialists! string 'em up."

The steam baker and the Military Representative wandered off into a loud argument which began with the

nationalisation of bakeries and degenerated into the commercial difficulty of managing multiple shops. The country gentlemen were conducting a private conversation, wherein occurred the name of a horse called Tagalie, who seemed once to have fluked a win at the Derby.

"Of course they didn't put her up for the Oaks."

The builder, who had good business reasons for pleasing landowners, suggested to Sir Hugh the ideal English solution: adjourn the case until next meeting. Sir Hugh was profoundly disturbed. How he hated this business! Obviously the fellow was honest, and obviously he was wrong. Fight or die, that was the rule of the world. The law said that if a man conscientiously objected he must be let off: well, then? He decided to pull the meeting together and rapped the table.

"Gentlemen, what are we going to do?"

"Appeal refused," said the steam baker promptly.

"I don't think we can do that," said Sir Hugh.

"Well, give him three months' exemption with leave to apply again," said the builder.

"Really," cried the Military Representative, "gentlemen, you can't give everybody three months with leave to apply again. The Kaiser's not giving the British Army three months."

"No," said Sir Hugh, "it is either exempt or not exempt."

"I say no exemption," remarked one of the country gentlemen.

"Look here," said Sir Hugh, "do you believe the man is telling the truth?"

"Ye–s, I suppose he is. Lunatic, of course."

"Well, if you think that, we must let him off."

"I protest," cried the Military Representative, "you can't let men off like that. He must do something."

"Ah!" said the builder, seizing another diplomatic opportunity, "let's give him non-combatant service."

The Tribunal flung itself with delight upon this solution, which enabled them to decide without saying yes or no. Only Sir Hugh felt awkward. Really this would not do. To serve or not to serve, that was the way he saw it. Conscience was a radical sort of thing. He was confirmed in his view when Cradoc came in again and the decision was communicated:

"Thank you, gentlemen; you've treated me very fairly, but I'd like to say I can't accept it."

"Can't accept it?" cried Colonel Macduff. "Let me tell you, sir, you're very lucky to get off so cheaply. You can go into the R. A. M. C. or something."

Cradoc shook his head.

"Thank you, gentlemen. I repeat you have treated me very fairly, but I can't do it. I can't go into a munition factory and make shells for other men to blow themselves to bits with, though I won't fire them myself; and I won't pick up men on the battlefield and patch them up so that they may go and fight again. Whatever I did to help this war would, I think, be wrong."

"Well, do as you like," said one of the country gentlemen. "You know what the consequences are. If you prefer a good safe gaol it's your business."

Cradoc did not reply, but asked for leave to appeal, which was granted, and went out.

When, a little later, the sitting ended, Sir Hugh crossed the road from the Court Hall towards the Mermaid, where he would lunch. He wondered why he should think of Pontius Pilate. The fellow was wrong, fundamentally wrong. Men could not detach themselves from the nation like that. How hateful it all was, this business of war, this concentration on killing, this withdrawal

from the arts, from learning, from laughter, love, games, all the things that make life lovely. And yet it had to be. Germany had to be beaten if those beautiful things were to be maintained.

Standing in front of the Court Hall, behind piled arms, was a detachment of the Sussex Coast, healthy, jolly-looking boys, not heavy countrymen, probably a small contingent from the Hastings shops, some delicately bred and now pleasantly sunburnt. Every man smiling. And all together singing:

> "Another little drink, another little drink,
> Another little drink won't do us any harm."

Heavens! what a prelude to patriotism!

XIV

As Cradoc stood on the steps of the Court Hall in the sweet softness of the April morning, he was impersonal, labouring under conflicting impressions. Yes; they had been fair enough. Generous, if anything. But it seemed queer that half a dozen old men should have the right to send young men to die for a cause they might believe in, and in most cases for a cause they knew nothing about. Old men! The silly old men who rule the world, the old men who make treaties and break them, and dodge round them, with a dirty sort of finesse — old men, who seemed to have stopped thinking about the to-morrow of the world, perhaps because their to-morrow is death, old men blind to the future, ignorant of the past. Experience! What bunkum experience was! Once upon a time, when there were no books, of course experience was the only thing; it was right then that the elders

should rule, but now, when all the knowledge a man needed could be bought for about a sovereign, there they sat with their rules of thumb, their precedents, their traditions, their habits, all the dead things. And look what they had done with their vaunted experience, people like old Bethmann-Hollweg, old Asquith, that theatrical old fool the Kaiser, and Carson, that frenzied mad bull. Funny creature, man. When a steam boiler got enough experience you sent it to the scrap heap; when a man got enough experience you sent him to the House of Lords.

As he walked away, through the Elizabethan loveliness of Rye, which perfectly outlines the past that stifles the young future, Cradoc's meditations grew more personal. "I wonder," he thought, "how I could have got on if instead of those six survivals I had appeared before six young men in khaki." He smiled. "There's a revolutionary idea for you. Cæsar just for once saluting the morituri." Then he thought: "Well, never mind, things must take their course." His mind was empty almost as he passed the Land Gate and crossed the railway; his body hinted that fresh air and a long walk would clarify his ideas. Under sentence as he was, he found himself cut off from the ordinary world. The future was so certain that the past came up in higher colours; fragments of it filled his mind. He thought of his childhood, in his mother's indescribably filthy little general shop, in a lane off High Street. He remembered the smell; stale tobacco, vinegar, dead flies, and a whiff of tar from outside. Then, errand boy, memories of a furtive grocer, of evening mysteries consecrated to the adulteration of honey by means of treacle. What a life! Seventy-four hours a week in the shop, and Sunday to make you feel mean and ratlike with your white cheeks, when you went

out into the country for a walk and saw a great thick labourer with a face like a copper can, chewing his pipe against a stile.

And yet they had not been fruitless years. He had seen the retail trade close, its smirking subservience to patronage, its arrogance to the poor, the respectable and solemn lie of the mangy speculators who had cornered dirty, inconvenient little shops, to block the way of supplies between the big modern store and the consumer. He had been to London, too, in the late 'nineties. All through the South African war he had roasted coffee. But those were not bad years. In those days one could get hold of the *Clarion* and Blatchford's "Merrie England." He went to Fabian meetings and was vastly stimulated by the cocky speeches of an inspired stork called Bernard Shaw, who said things about aristocrats and capitalists that made you roar with laughter and grind your teeth.

He was in the fields now; the fresh grass crissed under his feet. Still egocentric, Cradoc thought:

"I wish I'd stayed. London is like a dunghill quivering with its own corruption, but it's alive. Hastings! What a rat hole!" He had come back to Hastings to bury his mother, who had died suddenly, presumably overpowered by the fumes of the general shop. He had come back without love, to take this old body from its dirt-caked sheets, this old body which had reared him, first by arm-dragging, later by unbroken yelping and scolding which the poor, fretted nerves had made into a habit. He had brought five pounds with him to bury her. Afterwards, he had inventoried the furniture, for a little of it was worth saving from the municipal destructor, worth selling to some other black, bug-ridden home. Here a surprise awaited him: the top drawer of

the sideboard opened so slowly that on wrenching it fell out and emptied its contents. From under a dish clout fell a small, heavy packet, which he untied. This took a long time, for it was wrapped up in five different paper coverings, all hard-tied with string. The innermost core consisted in four sovereigns, eleven shillings, and fourpence. As he sorted out the rest of the contents he discovered a broken handbell: to the clapper was tied another little parcel containing nine and tenpence. Then Cradoc grew excited, and decided to search the house. It took him three days; Mrs. Cradoc, presumably fearing thieves, though she lived a life of abject poverty, had concealed hoards in incredible places. Her son found small sums under the rotting linoleum, in the toes of old boots, at the bottom of dusty ornaments; the miser had larded her house with money; there were hoards in the coals, and an unpleasant adventure up the chimney yielded nearly seven pounds. When at last he had done, though uncomfortably conscious that Mrs. Cradoc must have found places he could not think of, he had collected nearly three hundred pounds.

Then for a time he had been entirely happy. Accident led him to Knapenden, where he learned that old Evenwood, the grocer, was going to bits, what with drink and a bad son, and that the new settlement of Villa-Land offered a commercial opportunity. That was six years ago, when he was twenty-eight. The young man set up as the new grocer, calling his sister from service at Bexhill. He had made a living, attained membership of the Hastings I. L. P., fallen in love with Molly Hart — and then This had come.

He stopped with rather haggard eyes to look at the endless bleak marshes, so monotonous, broken only by little curtains of willow trees, dotted with slow sheep

and brooding, long-horned cattle. "This war," he thought, "comes upon the world like a storm on the sea. Worse, for nothing can stop a storm, while men could have stopped the war." As he walked on towards the ridge, strangely enough his thoughts were almost the same as those of Sir Hugh: broken infantry retiring along the road, with artillery racing behind the rise, cavalry sweeping round to head off the columns. He remembered that Voltaire suggested the world was the dream of a giant asleep in a planet. "What a nightmare the fellow's having," he thought.

And as he went on the excessive individualism of the man, his purely theoretic appreciation of humanity, that removed him from their passions, their prejudices, made of him a sham man, a mechanical toy. He was a man so blinded by logic to the impulses of others that he would not have understood if told that despite the King's Regulations, stretcher bearers would pick up their own men first. As he went, stumbling over tussocks, he dreamt an incredible new order, a world where no man desired wealth, where all were willing to work together, who had no impulse towards rivalry, where all men loved learning, where the words ambition, passion, jealousy, suspicion, meant nothing. He was happy, and he did not realise the infinite uselessness of these rapid, imaginative leaps. His dream obliterated obstacles, kings, banks, small traders, peasant landowners, priestly monopolists of revelation, men proud of race. He floated in an ethereal world; he had about as much idea of the steps to bring about this new world as might have an archangel taking up social reform.

His interview with his sister pulled him down to earth. She was a hard little dark woman, who had known romance in Bexhill, with a Pierrot. Then the Pierrot

moved away; the five shillings a week were not paid; the baby died, and Miss Cradoc shut her mouth like a rat trap. So shut it remained. Now she kept house for her brother, clean as a modern workhouse and as cheerful.

"How did you get on?" she asked.

"Non-combatant service."

"Ah. What's that? Hospital work?"

"No, I shan't take it."

"What'll happen if you don't?"

"Prison, I suppose."

"Oh! please yourself. I'll mind the shop."

Cradoc smiled. If he had told his sister that he was to be shot at dawn, no doubt she would have minded the shop. Still, shops had to be minded, and in a way old Ethel had got hold of an elementary thing.

Other people, it seemed, had also got hold of elementary things. After closing the shop and having his tea, he crossed the Green to go to Ascalon Farm. He was to meet Molly that night, and he felt they must have it out. He was not excited as he went down the lane, past the blackthorn bushes bursting into bloom, and the lean ash trees whose buds were already black. So he was not surprised at being received on the threshold by Hart, who had seen him coming. The stout farmer seemed to have expanded, guarded his doorway as a hen covers her chicks. All the squat, red figure said was:

"Git out."

"What do you mean?" asked Cradoc.

"What I say," replied Hart, with an air of completely clearing up the question. "Git out. That's all."

"Now look here, Mr. Hart, this is all very well, but before I get out there are one or two little things we've got to settle. One thing, rather, and that's Molly. She was to meet me up the lane."

"She won't," said Hart. "I'll rive the guts out of her if she does."

A despair fell over Cradoc. If a man argued with him it had an effect on him. But Hart obviously was not so affected. How could he get at him? A punch in the jaw? That might not help matters much, and Hart would get the best of it. Then, in self-contempt, Cradoc discovered the way to Hart's understanding:

"There's another thing too: you owe me thirty shillings for groceries."

"Ah!" said Hart, his sensitive fibre touched, "now you're talking, Mr. Conscientious Objector. Come inside and have your dirty money. Suppose you *have* got to come inside. One has to take a receipt from the likes of you."

In the kitchen Hart took out with much ceremony a large, dirty purse. To the right and left of the hearth sat two women. One was Mrs. Hart, her eyes averted, steadily knitting a gray stocking. Not once did she raise the bent head on which the tight-drawn black hair lay as if polished. On the other side sat Molly, short, broad, milk-white, under her loose crown of tangled chestnut hair. She was reading a novelette, and from time to time the blue eyes looked curiously from under the raised brows. She stirred Cradoc. How could he tell what was her attitude? When the receipt was signed, Cradoc said:

"Now, Molly, I'll be waiting for you in the lane. You've got to come; you promised, you know."

As he went he heard the farmer address his daughter:

"If you go, I'll break every bone in your body."

But still he waited in the cool twilight. He knew she would come. After all the caresses which had passed between them, she must come. And, indeed, in a moment

he saw the short figure, like a shadow through the elm trees. Then she was quite near him, and he put out both hands. Cradoc, in that moment, had an aching need of her. Not only because she was his love, not only because the broad healthiness, the whiteness, the plumpness of her made a searching appeal to the nervous delicacy of the city dweller, but because in the bleakness of the world which to-day had racked him he hoped to find a moment of forgetfulness on her broad breast. Then she stopped, two yards away, and put out a hand palm outwards. He chose to misunderstand her, as a sick man refuses to accept the doctor's sentence:

"It was kind of you to come," he said, "—with your father threatening you."

"He ain't threatening me. It's all right."

"But he said he'd . . ."

"Said he'd rive my guts out. But I said I was coming out because I was going to give you the chuck, and you can have it." She made as if to turn. "Good-bye-ee!"

"Molly!" cried Cradoc. How funnily his voice squawked, he thought.

"Oh, I don't want to hear any more. You talk too much, that's what you do. Talking comes natural to you like fighting does to others."

"Don't you love me any more, Molly?"

She evaded him. "Do you think I'm going to have everybody see me going out with a shirker? Don't you believe it, Mr. Cradoc. Something in khaki is more my style. Like the other girls." She stopped, and as if the softness of the evening overcame her for a moment, her voice grew gentler: "Course I don't say—if you was to change your mind, perhaps I might change mine too. See what I mean? Khaki or blue, that's the ticket." She turned and disappeared up the cart track.

For a long time the ironic little song that died away with her footsteps rang in Cradoc's ears:

"Good-bye, little girl, good-bye,
Bye and bye, little girl, bye and bye,
In my uniform of blue
I'll come marching back to you:
Good-bye, little girl, good-bye."

XV

THAT night Sutton was admitted to dine with the upper servants, and Westcott, in her new blouse of Irish lace, wearing the famous Westcott turquoise and sham pearl necklace, sat by his side. It was an old and difficult question, this dinner of the upper servants at Knapenden Place. Mr. Lee and Mrs. Marsden had had many anxious debates.

"We can't have Mr. Sutton," said Mrs. Marsden, "he is a footman."

"Groom of the chamber, ma'am," said Lee, "not footman."

Mrs. Marsden waved away this distinction.

"When I say footman I mean footman. Wouldn't alter it, Mr. Lee, if you called him Emperor of China." Mrs. Marsden supported her arguments with instances taken from the household of the Duke of Shropshire; Lee protested that at Mr. Mosenberg's, at Battle, "who, if you will pardon me, ma'am, could buy up three dukes, the groom of the chamber did dine." It had extended over months, this quarrel. But this evening, since Mr. Sutton was in khaki, and would join the Sussex Coast Regiment next day, as also he had, in the words of Sir James Barrie, cast a favourable eye on Westcott ("Bag-

gage," added Mrs. Marsden), the housekeeper had decided to relax. She put it to Mr. Lee: "This being war time I have resolved to overlook."

And so it was a cheerful dinner party enough. It began at 9.30, and if it had not been for the ribaldry of Mr. Temple, the chauffeur, and his new young wife, it would have extended over several hours, with the assistance of port and cigars. (Lee was entirely honest, but this evening he also had resolved to overlook.)

Westcott, blue-eyed, flaxen-haired, with a prehensile way of slewing her eyes sideways at the men, was queen of the party. She did not say very much; most of the conversation was confined to Mrs. Marsden and Lee, who had many memories to exchange as to the ways of gentlemen, and gentlemen's gentlemen. Mr. Temple contributed regrettable memories of what happened in motor cars. He was sternly repressed by Mrs. Marsden: "Before a young gal, Mr. Temple, please don't forget yourself." And tactfully directed the conversation to the grapes that were grown on the Shropshire estate.

As for Mr. Sutton, he felt self-conscious, elated, and sure that in khaki his rather insufficient chest looked several sizes larger. The party degenerated a little when Sir Hugh's valet, Ratby, joined them, for there were cleavages in the Knapenden loyalty. Temperaments were discussed.

"Her Ladyship," said Westcott, "there's only one thing can be said about 'er; her temper's 'ot."

Anecdotes testified to the incandescence of Lady Oakley's temper. It was not like Sir Hugh.

"That man's an angel," said Mrs. Marsden, "so determined, and so nice to cats, and all dumb animals," she added feelingly. "I've seen him carrying Ginger about in his arms like a baby. It nearly makes one weep."

Mrs. Marsden illustrated this slightly, while Ratby, ex-cavalryman, engaged in a fierce dispute with the chauffeur as to the stinking tin cans he passed his days with. Meanwhile the butler looked benevolently round, slowly blinking his left eye, the eyelashes of which, as he proceeded with the port, seemed to have got strangely stuck together. It was then Lee decided to break into song. Westcott got up quietly, and with a glance at Sutton went out. The ex-groom of the chamber hesitated, but as now all had taken up the chorus:

> "On Monday I go out with a soldier,
> On Tuesday I go out with a tar,"

he softly closed the door behind him, with a delicious sense of Romeo and Juliet, and the fast life. He followed the white shadow of Westcott down the corridors, through the lonely pantry, out into the plantation. It was exquisite. A full moon hung in the pale blue sky like a pan of burnished metal, and Westcott, who seemed to be eluding him on purpose, danced laughing from tree to tree, like a blooming fairy in a book. He was rather unsteady, and as he chased her through the plantation, led by her laughter, he swore as he tripped over stumps:

"'Ere," he whispered at length, "give over, Maud."

"You can't catch me! you can't catch me!" came the voice.

He lurched forward violently. She eluded him, but as he stopped in disgust, as if about to return to the house, Westcott instinctively knew it, felt that the nymph should now allow herself to be caught. She was by his side, blinding him with both hands. The satyr in khaki turned with a growl and seized her.

At last she freed herself, rubbing her cheeks as if to

efface his kisses, calling him a great brute, and telling him that if he didn't behave she would go in. Yet she clung to the khakied arm. He said, with sudden suspicion:

"I say, Maudie, there's no kid in this. Is there?"

"What do you mean?" said Westcott, with the wide eyes of innocence.

"What about Keele?"

"Well, what about him?"

"Weren't you walking out with him?"

"Go on, you great silly," said Westcott as she jabbed the man in the ribs with her elbow. "What's he? A common farmer's boy."

"There's others too," said Sutton, with an excess of ferocity. "Temple's married now. In the nick of time I should say. They used to talk about you and him. Tell you what, I'm going out to a place where they stick men with bayonets. When I come back, if I hear of you monkeying round with anybody, I'll . . ."

"What will you do?" cried the girl, clinging to him. Her gaze was wild and frightened, her mouth deliciously open in expectation.

"Do you in," said Sutton. He seized her by both arms.

"No, you won't," she whispered. "You'll be my lonely soldier-boy."

"Do you in," he repeated, shaking her a little, as if he had not heard her, and drawing her closer into his arms. "Do you in," he repeated again, more hoarsely, as he pressed his mouth upon her open lips, and felt her crunch up in his arms, soft, frightened, reluctant, and drawn closer to him in her desire by those repulsions and those fears.

XVI

Frank Cottenham slowed up the car as he turned into the approach of the works; then, as the crowd grew denser, he stopped to let it go past. The girls were coming out in bunches, in running single units, in intertwined, affectionate couples. Nearly all wore their overalls, ugly figures, skinned of hair by their close caps, and yet unmasculine in their bunchy trousers. Here and there bobbed the red cap of a girl from the Woolwich inspection, while the white mass was flecked also by the red armlets of the junior charge hands, and those of their seniors, red with the black S. Cottenham sat back, smiling, in the middle of this friendly crowd, every one of whom looked covertly, or insolently, or just with the curiosity of youth, at the boss. He liked this swarming femininity, and let his eyes rest with satisfaction on the young faces, the white skins, that somehow resisted the T. N. T. colour, the dark sullen faces that were animal and pleasant; he liked too, the older women, who shoved their way through the crowd, conscious of the urgency of their business. As the crowd cleared a little Irvine said:

"I think we can go on now."

"One moment," said Cottenham to his Manager, "we'll only run up against "C" Division. This is the "B" crowd." What he did not say was that the neighbourhood of these hundreds of young women created in him a pleasant, if faint, stir. He watched them, searching as an epicure for something agreeable, a stray golden curl, long fingers, an eye shining through a curtain of eyelashes like the moon through foliage. For Cottenham loved women, all women; he adopted the Frenchman's saying that he had never seen an ugly woman. Working girls these, a coarse, bawling crowd at times,

capable of much ugly laughter, ugly attitudes, jostlings, shovings, breaking out now and then into language he did not use. But still women, and young, and so adorable.

Cottenham did not, as a matter of principle, take much notice of his thirteen hundred hands. He knew it did not do. Besides, as he told himself now and then, he was a happy man. As he sat in the car, his pasha glance lying light over these women, he thought with a faint sense of remorse of his own beautiful dark wife in his house up the Medway, the creature with the slumbrous dark eyes, that were so alluring and dominant. It seemed unfair that he should think of her now, walking in the big garden, holding up one of his three small children to pull at the blossoms of the hawthorn; that she should have those long, lovely, dark hands, with finger-nails like coral, while these girls rushed and hustled towards the rough meats of the canteen. Still, he thought, "It won't last. What I see before me is the seed of the future. It'll grow up into thick, strong weed. It will choke my hawthorns, before it has done."

As "C" Division suddenly burst like a puff of white smoke from the long shop strangely camouflaged in purple and green, he thought of the coming social order that was going to play the devil with the Cottenham works and with other damned capitalists. He did not mind very much, but he could not help fearing that with the damned capitalists would go many of the things he loved, good manners, the odes of Horace, and the Bach fugues which, serene and pitiless as Euclid, measured his daily life. He sighed: "Well, it'll last a while and after me — the flood."

Then his eyes, which, for a moment had fixed on emptiness, encountered in the crowd two eyes. He had

a sense of shock. He repressed an impulse to turn round and look after the girl: it would have been fatal, with the whole factory watching him. But though he had seen her only as for a moment one may compass a swallow's flight, she lived before him with incredible obstinacy.

Large grey eyes, sorrowful eyes. Well, no. Not sorrowful eyes. They must have been laughing at him, really, under their long, up-curling lashes. How pale she was! That made her broad mouth look so red. The pointed chin too. He had an impression of strands of red-brown hair escaping from under the cap; an impression of a rather tall girl, who looked thin in the heavy overalls.

As if to rid himself of the over-strong impression, he pretended to himself that the crowd was thinning, started the car, which whirred slowly into the works. Soon he was in his office, all clear, devoid of matches, tobacco, pipe, knife, his feet clumsy in the heavy felt shoes. A mass of correspondence, unopened brown envelopes " On his Majesty's Service ", specimens of cartridge bags, little boxes marked " Detonators—Dangerous "— all this cumbered his desk, suggested urgency. But for a moment Frank Cottenham sat back in his armchair and allowed himself to dream. Then, angrily, he thrust the dream away. " Don't be a fool," he told himself roughly, and began to read his letters.

But all that morning he was haunted. It was not a picture hung before his eyes; rather it was an intangible presence brooded over him. He fought it. He called in Irvine unnecessarily; he dictated unusually prolix letters, as if he were trying to detain about him a human presence, as if afraid to remain alone with that sensation. In the afternoon, after lunch, and a complex deal

with the owners of the disused wharfs on the Stroud bank, he determined to face it:

"Queer, those girls of the people. There is such a finesse about some of them. Something delicate, and suggestive of breed. We talk of the aristocratic type! Lord! One only has to look at the aristocratic type in its lumpy tweeds and its big boots, its big hands, its ugly teeth and its complexion like a young brick. There is more aristocracy in many a London shopgirl. A sort of natural aristocracy. What is aristocracy, after all? Difference?" He remembered that most of his experience had lain with the girls of the people. Often he had told himself that he had coarse tastes. "Nonsense," he remarked aloud, "they've got a natural grace, some of them. And after all," he smiled, "we call them the girls of the people, but it's a wise girl who knows her own father if her mother was pretty."

Behind these generalities hung still the memory of the face he had seen. "Really, old chap," he told himself, "this won't do. It won't do at all. If she weren't in your own factory, I don't say: you might be making a silly ass of yourself, but there are limits to silliness, even in asses. Oh, yes," he answered the debater in his heart, "you say there's nothing in it. Well, let me tell you, as a man who has had more to do with women than theoretical intellectuals like you, this sort of thing looks like nothing. But when you've gone on a bit you find it has grown. Let us look at it squarely. Here am I, Frank Cottenham, thirty-nine, shall we say fairly presentable." He looked up to the mirror over the washing basin and saw a young-looking man, with close cut, rather curly brown hair, bright blue eyes, a clipped moustache, and an expression half-stern, half-roguish. "Yes, fairly presentable. Thirty-nine. Not too old to

make a fool of himself. Third proprietor of the Cottenham works; good old explosive works, nearly as old as Nobel's. Therefore known to most of Rochester, part of Chatham, and every one of his thirteen hundred girls. And every one of his thirteen hundred girls' best friends, and their young men, and their mothers, and the shopkeepers, and the shopkeepers' mothers. — Do you really think, Frank, my boy, that you can shed a friendly glance in this abominable little town without it getting into the paper? No, it can't be done. You aren't moral, but you're prudent, as is the way with your class. Chuck it, I say, chuck it."

All through that day Cottenham chucked it. He insisted on being present at an interview with the accountants of the Ministry of Munitions, and interfering with the elaborately mendacious plans of his head storekeeper; he carpeted Miss Livingstone, and stung her stern soul by telling her that she coddled the girls and that the Cottenham Welfare would be called the Cotton-wool affair before she'd done.

From time to time he turned upon himself:

"But, damn it all, man, you can't follow the girl and track her down. And what if you do? At your age and in your position it's impossible."

Then he told himself that he did not attend to his work properly and that he ought to be seen now and then in the clean area. So he toured the various shops, determined to find fault: "I suppose I'll run across her," he thought, "but it can't be helped, I ought to be seen in the shops now and then."

Then, having visited "A" and "B" divisions, he changed his mind and decided that he must telephone London. The girls at the branch exchange liked and admired their employer; there was a considerable dis-

cussion later on at tea: what could have happened to make Mr. Cottenham damn the telephone exchange? and damn the telephone? and damn everything?

XVII

"Poor old Bob," said David Marchmont, as he puffed at his cigar.

"I suppose it's sure now," said Lady Oakley.

"Quite sure. Two of his men managed to escape after being kept in a dug-out for two days. They tried to bring his body in. That's how they got caught."

"Hetty's splendid," said Sir Hugh.

"Yes, poor old mater. Game as they make 'em."

"It's lucky she's got you," said Lady Oakley, but there was something a little hostile in her eyes as she said this. David, in his blue lounge suit, made to resemble a naval uniform, but devoid of gold lace, exquisitely polished and hair-clipped, eye-glassed, clean-shaven, like his mother in a way, squirmed in his chair.

"Ah, well," he said vaguely. What he meant was that he was heavily engaged at the Admiralty, and that it was impossible for him to go to sea.

The three were sitting after lunch in the Berkeley. Sir Hugh meditatively sucked his cigar, watching the crowd, the laughing, talkative, well-dressed crowd, among which passed and repassed slim girls, in coats and skirts and the fashionable fur tippets of the day. One of them came up to him. He smiled.

"I've bought three flags, so far," he said, opening his coat to show them pinned inside the lapel. "Still — " He fumbled in his pocket. The girl, a tall dark girl, the sort that drives cars beyond the speed limit and its owner to wonder what things are coming to, vigorously

seized his lapel, stuck in still another flag, and with a businesslike smile acknowledged the heavy drop of half-a-crown into her money box.

"It makes one feel all the worse," said Lady Oakley, "with things going on as they are."

"Ah, yes," said Marchmont, "Kut — Nasty jar, that. We did all we could, you know, but the Tigris is so low this time of year we couldn't get a gunboat up."

"Oh, I don't mean only Kut," said Lady Oakley petulantly. "Of course it's awful, but we'll get back on the Turk before we've done. It's the whole thing. Those Irish."

"Well, we've settled the rebels," said Marchmont.

"I should think we did," said Lady Oakley. "We needn't bother about a handful of German agents in Dublin. Of course we settled them. And I hope this Government will be a little less mealy-mouthed than it generally is. They ought to be shot, every one of 'em."

"It seems a great pity," said Sir Hugh. "What a mess Ireland is in."

"There'd be no mess, Hugh, if there was no disloyalty. The Canadians are all right; the Australians are all right, even the Boers are all right. I'd like to know what the Irish have got to complain about. One might think we illtreated them. Rights! What rights? Can't the Irish go into the Army? the Navy? or the Church? Haven't we got Irish barristers? There are Irishmen in the Admiralty. Aren't there, David? We treat them like our own. What do they want?"

"It's an old story, Lena," said Sir Hugh, as he brooded over his Liberal Unionist past. "A complicated story. I'm beginning to think we have made rather a mess of things in Ireland. Sometimes we bully them, and sometimes we pet 'em. It doesn't seem to answer either way."

"Of course it doesn't answer. One can't get on with the Irish. They're impossible people. Besides, they've all got loose mouths and bad teeth."

The two men laughed at this characteristically Lena-ish argument.

"Well," said Sir Hugh, "I don't pretend to be a Home Ruler, but still," he added, for the moment typically English and vague, "I suppose we shall have to do something after the war."

"Yes, after the war. But meanwhile we've got to get on with it. We haven't got time for the Irish. It's all our own fault," added Lady Oakley. "No propaganda in Ireland, I don't believe they know what the war's about. The things we could tell them! Only last week they deported twenty-five thousand women from Lille. Deported to what fate? I hope we'll have a chance of deporting twenty-five thousand German women. That'll give them a taste of it. An eye for an eye, that's the only way with the Hun."

Sir Hugh said nothing. Why did Cradoc's remark: "Revenge in turns, that is the history of the world," suddenly occur to him.

Lady Oakley was now fairly launched. Diverging from the iniquity of having exempted Irishmen from general compulsion, which had been passed two days before, she was now heaping scorn and hatred upon Mr. Asquith.

"The audacity of the man!" she said. "It's so like him trying to shuffle and squirm out of necessity by trying to get hold of boys of seventeen. . . ."

"Eighteen," said Sir Hugh.

"Well, children, anyhow and time-expired men, men who've done their bit, rather than annoy the shirkers and the pro-Germans. — Why! do you know that there

are thousands of young men in this country who got married in February to dodge conscription? "

"Awful idea, Aunt Lena," said David. "Think of the poor young man in February, standing in front of his looking-glass one night, and saying: 'The trenches or Mabel. Which?'"

"And a lot of them chose the trenches," said Sir Hugh, laughing.

"It's all very well laughing," said Lady Oakley. "It's serious, very serious. Everything is in an awful state. We aren't getting on with the war; I suppose we're waiting for Verdun to fall; then we'll begin. Spying and plotting everywhere. And the Government doing nothing. Nothing! A blockade about as useful as a sieve. Ships being sunk by the dozen every day. Nobody can say we aren't trying to lose the war. Oh, yes, we are," said Lady Oakley overriding possible objections. "The whole country is going mad. Look at the condition of the streets. Have you read General Smith-Dorrien's article? Have you heard of all these night clubs, which are trapping our young officers and making them tell all they know after the poor boys have had too much champagne? Female harpies and German agents every one of them. Thank God! though, there is *some* public opinion left. I hear they're closing the promenades in the music halls; that'll help a little, but why they don't close Parliament and stop this talk-talk I don't know."

Then Sylvia, more than ever handsome, in a light musquash coat, drew near to the table and insisted on selling them all the everlasting flags.

"I've got to get rid of these within a quarter of an hour. I can't return them, and I can't stay."

"You seem very busy, Sylvia," said Sir Hugh.

"Busy! Father, you don't know what work is at

Knapenden. I've been run off my legs this morning, trying to catch the people between the Piccadilly entrance and the Berkeley Street entrance. Somebody didn't turn up, and I had to try for both."

"Seems to me that they ought to have got hold of puss-in-boots for a job like that," said Sir Hugh.

"It isn't as funny as it sounds, father. And this afternoon I've got a Committee; and I ought to look in at my stall. There's the tableaux, too."

"What tableaux?" asked Lady Oakley.

"Oh! I forgot to ask you, mother. Can you send me up your Persian shawl? I'm appearing as India, or Italy, it isn't settled which. Oh!" and she made a convulsive dash towards the entrance to stop a sly and unflagged brigadier.

"Marvellous girl," said Sir Hugh. "Such energy."

"Makes one feel one's getting on with the war," said David.

"Anyhow, she is doing something," said Lady Oakley, defending her young.

When Sylvia returned she was excited.

"He gave me a sovereign, a real sovereign in gold, the first I've seen for two years. And he said he was keeping it as a memento of the times before the war — but he'd have a smile from me instead, as they didn't make those smiles nowadays."

All three laughed.

"Nice man," said Sylvia thoughtfully. Then energy expelled meditation. "In five minutes I must go. I simply don't know what to do. You've no idea what a worry tableaux are. Everybody wants to be France, or Belgium, and when we look for somebody to be Montenegro people want to know what it is. Lady Derwen thought it was a hair wash. I wish I hadn't told her

the war had come to teach people geography. She thought I was alluding to the Battersea Board School where she was educated. Oh, dear, I must go. And I've got a pal of Andy's to look after, too, a Guardee boy, one of the dinkiest little wounded you ever knew."

"Sylvia," said Sir Hugh brutally, "whenever you're looking after a pal of Andy's, it's always a wounded one. I believe you like them better when they're wounded."

"Of course she does," said Lady Oakley, with a fond glance at her handsome daughter. "What woman wouldn't?"

Sir Hugh looked at them thoughtfully. "Do you know?" he said, "I think you women rather enjoy this war. Oh, don't protest, I say you're enjoying this war, and that's why you like the wounded. You're savage creatures. The idea of blood excites you."

"Hugh! how can you be so horrid."

"I may be horrid, but it's true. War to you is like a rattling good railway novel, a serial story with a frightful instalment in every morning's paper. War gives you all the heroism, and excitement, and colour, and horror that you miss in your ordinary lives. To women war is the grand international cinema."

"Don't be absurd," said Lady Oakley.

David Marchmont looked at Sylvia thoughtfully. Fine girl. A sensual looking type. Wonder how she got on with that black-browed brute, Jervaulx. His little hand stroked his cheek thoughtfully, as he rested upon her a rather cloudy blue eye. He was a well-read man, and had been to a German university. Queer idea, that of Sir Hugh's; there was something like that in Havelock Ellis, or was it Kraft Ebbing? He wondered whether that was why the women rushed to be nurses. Was it pity? Or was it a sort of sensual exhilaration? Did it

caress in them something secret? this contact with agonised nerves and gaping wounds. A sort of sadism?

"Father," said Sylvia, "you make me sick. As a punishment you must buy all the flags I've got left. Two pounds, please."

"Oh, I say, Sylvia," murmured Sir Hugh as he searched for his pocketbook.

"It's your own fault, father. Here you are, take them home. You can go round Knapenden selling them. It'll give you something to do."

XVIII

"But do you think we ought to?" said Lady Oakley. "What about the example."

"Lena, I'm sick of being a good example. Stephen hasn't had leave for six and a half months. Now is our chance. Ask all the boys and all the girls; order a leg of mutton or rather a leg of beef; let the innocence of milk and the avaricious flow of whisky be familiar in this house. Send to London for a fatted calf, tie ribbons round the gramophone."

"Don't be silly, Hugh," said Lady Oakley, smiling at her own disapproval. "He won't expect it in war time."

"Oh, yes, he will. Our young soldier will be a thorough Nietzschean when he comes home. He'll have learnt at the front that man is made for war and woman for the recreation of the warrior."

And so it was. When Stephen, extraordinarily neat, as subalterns somehow are an hour after leaving the trenches, landed on Snailham platform, prepared to be ironic, to comment on: "The old folks at home, waiting with a beating heart in the shadow of the little church nestling in the dell, while the old coachman, his play-

fellow of yore — etc.," he was received by a miniature mob.

"Good Lord!" he said, as he jumped on the platform, and was confronted with his father, his mother, Sylvia, Jimmy Quin, Mary, the long-forgotten Miss Jesmond, a multiplying Station Master, a combined porter-shunter-signalman. "Good Lord!" he repeated, "where's the illuminated address? My good people, I haven't won the V. C."

The week went on as it had begun, but more so. Sir Hugh, in pursuit of some coherent ideal, kept things going with a swish. He became the organiser of compulsory games. Petrol was somehow discovered, in those uncontrolled days when already scarcity prevailed. Temple daily threatened to strike, because the gentlemen knocked out their pipes on the paint of the car, while the young ladies outraged his pride by screaming whenever he took a corner, and outraged it still more by making insulting remarks when the overladen car tried to crawl up hills. The weather entered into the conspiracy. A very soft southeaster blew, cloudless. Blackthorn, hawthorn, almond tree bent under fragrant burdens. Horses cast by the army reappeared. There were races. A donkey steeplechase through the kitchen garden created a dreadful scene with Peele. And one day there was a tug-of-war, men *v.* women, where the men pulled with one hand only, on grounds of chivalry, they said, but really because Quin was winged in the left arm. The girls won to the accompaniment of a new battle cry: "À Pankhurst! à Pankhurst!" And every night the beribboned gramophone (Sir Hugh had insisted on decorating it) and an irrepressible pianola forced the dancing. At the week-end, when disorder was extended by the arrival of young Moss, convalescent owing to a

slight wound in the head, which, he said, entitled him to describe himself as the Mad Musician of the Marshes, there was a gala night devoted to the performance of a musical comedy entitled " The Merry Wives of Coburg", words by James Quin, music by Moses Moss (for the young man chose to carry off his persuasion by exaggerating it) and incidental lyrics by Anybody.

Sir Hugh, in the midst of the pleasant turmoil, felt youthful and at ease. He loved this atmosphere of disturbance; it delighted him to encounter, in this big solid house, somebody who was twenty-two or twenty; as he sat in his study with the door open, occasionally tickling Kallikrates behind the ear, to soothe him (for Kallikrates spent this week in a state of terror and exasperation), he collected precious specimens: screams, shrill laughter, and the occasional crash of an ornament. The only blemish was provided by Quin and Miss Moss, on whom Sir Hugh kept a special watch, for youth's gentle pander hoped to catch them kissing. They seized Kallikrates by his sumptuous tail, hauled him out from under a bookcase, and then turned him loose after ignobly forcing his head into a foolscap envelope.

In a sense, as Stephen put it, that was the best turn of the week, and the only one " Father hadn't planned." The terrified cat fled, hurtled against the brocade curtains of the drawing-room, climbed them to the very top, and then stood on the cornice pole, waving from left to right his head still encased in the envelope, like some strange antediluvian animal. The party congregated in the drawing-room to get him down, but nothing would persuade him.

Cries of " Milk! " failed to entice him. Miss Jesmond suggested a walking stick and cat's meat, but still Kallikrates, unsteadily poised on the cornice pole, gave vent

only to melancholy howls. At last, after a quarter of an hour, ladders were brought by Ratby and Peele, and as it was obvious that Kallikrates would cling and scratch, Stephen and Quin insisted on going up provided with trench gloves and gas masks. Old Toss shambled in and sat down, contemplating the strangeness of man.

As they went up young Moss played on the piano a gloomy rendering of Excelsior. . . .

Lovely young people. Lovely, unslayable youth, everlastingly sprouting from the bleeding tree of life as green leaves on a stump. Sir Hugh wondered whether they were so merry only because they knew the future to be so uncertain. He thought that: "Let us drink and be merry, for to-morrow . . ." must have been said in the midst of war.

As if determined to increase the confusion, Sir Hugh was not content with these for Sunday lunch. A more solid, if less noisy reinforcement arrived in the shape of Mrs. Moss, Sir John and Lady Jesmond. A leaf was put into the dining-room table, and indeed it looked as if Sir Hugh's jocular leg of beef would be wanted. He sat at the head of his table: in these dreary two years he had come to forget that there were such things as lunch parties of fourteen. He did not say very much. In the contagious noise he was conscious only of snatches of conversation. He heard Quin raise a roar of laughter by describing the death of the mess cook. "Fell head first into his pot; spoiled the stew, though."

The Observer had brought increasingly nervous news of the Austrian offensive in Italy, and there still was sporadic but formidable fighting round Verdun. A latent excitement hung about our expected offensive that never came.

"One begins to think," said Sir John, "that it'll never

come at all. It's on a par with everything we do. We never handle a situation until it's beyond handling. Look at that fellow Tino! we ought to string him up."

"We do what we can, Sir," said Quin naughtily. "We've called our mess cat 'Tino'; his morals are awful."

Sir John blew and glowered. He did not like young men. He responded more cheerfully to Lady Oakley, who imparted the pleasant news that the local conscientious objector, Cradoc, had appealed in vain and had been handed over at Rye.

"I don't suppose they'll make a soldier of him, though," she added. "That sort of man prefers to be kept in gaol at the expense of his country."

The word expense moved Mr. and Mrs. Moss. Sir Hugh caught a note of anxiety in their reference to the income tax, which had just been raised as high as four and six, to say nothing of supertax. Young Moss was apologising to Louise Douglas.

"Make allowance for my antiquities, do. They were brought up to worship the golden calf, but I was brought up to roast it."

Louise said nothing, but rested on him the uncomprehending gaze of her soft eyes. He felt that she did not understand him, but sympathised with him all the same.

There was Quin being flippant again! "Adorable gypsy boy!" thought Sir Hugh. "What was that? . . ."

". . . We found out that every Sunday morning the Huns used to meet in a communication trench and hold a service. Rattling good hymns they were too. Came in handy: as soon as we spotted them the R. F. A. put down a few shells on that corner to encourage their aspirations to a better world."

Everybody laughed, but somehow this struck Sir Hugh

as unpleasant. Then he reproached himself. "What an old stuck pig of a Victorian I am!" he thought. "Is not a shell the best offering moderns can think of to the God of Battles?"

Indeed, a certain bitterness was creeping into the conversation; only one young couple was silent, Sylvia and Mr. March, a tall, thin, young gunner, who seemed frightened of Mrs. Jervaulx, of her dominating beauty. The young man was so shy that he made a sensation. Just as Lady Oakley was declaring that the girl drivers, girl lift attendants, and so forth, were creating a revolution in female independence, March burst forth in a harsh, toneless voice that secured silence.

"Men are brutes. I remember a month ago. I lost my field glasses and my purse. I'd been laid out by the wind of a shell, just for a moment. No damage, but they thought I was done in. I wasn't really, but the R. A. M. C. cleared me out nicely. Went over my pockets like a swell mob. Only thing they forgot was my clothes, which was pretty decent of them considering we call 'em Rob Any Man's Corpse."

Lady Oakley flung herself into the gap which this anecdote created, and initiated a vigorous discussion on war books. "Ordeal by Battle", was her favourite, but Mrs. Moss held for "Between the Lines."

"So graphic," she said, and at intervals, "so graphic."

Lady Jesmond spoke up for "Gallipoli." "It makes one realise the poetry of the war."

"Ah," said Mrs. Moss, "Boyd Cable is so graphic."

Then came Stephen's outburst. Fortunately none save Louise, who sat by his side, heard the first words:

"So graphic! so Daily Graphic!" His voice grew louder: "All that sort of thing," he said, "it's tosh. Fleet Street slush. There's only one kind of war book;

Haig sends you a chapter of that every day. I can tell you that out there war books make us tired. Fellows out there don't want war books. They write 'em, in Flanders ink, one quarter blood and three quarters mud."

The party stared at the young man, and for the first time Sir Hugh discerned in him a change. He looked pale under the sunburn, more hawk-like than ever about the nose, as if savagery had crept into the flippant boy. Stephen stared at his plate and went on:

"There's things they don't put into the war books, because they aren't nice and cleaned up, and they'd interfere with the circulation. Fellows out there don't sit for Bairnsfather, stick on dummy whiskers, and juggle with grenades; they don't wash night and morning and put on a clean shirt and a noble Sunday-school expression as patented by Mr. Eric Kennington. They aren't fighting for the right; fighting for their grub's more in their line. They don't talk about clean peace; they bail their boots out and try to keep the rats off their faces while they sleep."

"Stephen, old chap," said Sir Hugh. But the youth went on, entranced:

"Over here you think war's a revue. Millions of people sitting in the stalls, in London, looking on. And people like Ian Hay keeping up the idea that war's a manly sport; if only you keep your soul white, and play the game like Christian gentlemen, you'll come out with your self-respect and half a dozen medals. — Fight the Germans according to the precepts of Doctor Arnold, fair and square, a good blow between the eyes, and shake hands after, no malice. War books make me sick. Those people would be poetic about Charles Peace. Fighting like gentlemen! The English Tommy as nature's gentleman! Idealistic bank clerks! Temporary

gentlemen out there, temporary fools here. Don't let's pretend! Don't let's be literary till it's over, till they've done fighting. They don't fight like knights in a beastly tournament, but like rats in a common drain; that's more like it, bayoneting men in the back instead of the front, because it's safer; that's more like it — hitting below the belt when you get a chance, because it's softer."

XIX

THE May day surrounded the young people with a droughty fire. The sun fell in shafts of brass from the polished vault of the sky. They went in a straggling file along the lanes north of Udimore Ridge; in the ardent afternoon the party lagged; it tended to break up into twos and threes, until they were but specks upon the grass paths, male grey or blue flannel, feminine skirts of white serge, and bright sweaters. Ahead, paced by Miss Jesmond's long stride, went Stephen and Louise, he moody and sunken in some private reverie, she solicitous, white and cool as a water lily.

"The worst of this part of the country," said Miss Jesmond, "is the huntin' 's so poor. Too much plough, to begin with; those small farms have cut up the country, so you never seem to get away. And the wire! now they're even puttin' up wire!"

"You haven't been long at Northiam?" asked Louise.

"No. Only a year. But father is talkin' of goin' back to Leicestershire. Wish he would. Remember our last day, in February, just before the frost started; the fox went away from Grinton's Wood, you know, the other side of Brede; down the slope he went, hounds on the top of him; didn't seem to be a trier; they looked like choppin' him before he'd got away more than a couple

of fields — and then there we were in the middle of the dykes! At the first dyke the take-off was beastly greasy, and my old Dolly put in straight in it. Oh! what a day!"

"Did you get him in the end?" asked Louise absently. She did not hunt.

"Rather not. He went to ground somewhere below the windmill."

"Is the Auctioneer still a Radical?" asked Stephen, alluding to internal troubles on the Rural District Council.

They talked village politics, listless in the heat. But Stephen did not care much; he was amused only when Sir John himself foamed and raved at the upstart member. The talk fell to the two girls.

"I hear skirts are to be skimpy this autumn," said Miss Jesmond.

"Oh! I'm rather glad. Don't you think they'd got too full?" Louise replied.

"Perhaps. Anyhow, it'll be a change. Only, there's this: will drapery go in for evening frocks?"

Stephen had lagged behind, swinging his stick, languidly decapitating the tall thistles about to flower. Over his shoulder he could see Monica, head bent, listening to Moss, who gesticulated a little.

The young Jew talked well and knew it. Just then, as often, music was in his mind.

"It's hard on a man," he said, "to be a musician. People don't take him seriously. If a fellow's literary, it's not so bad; it comes the way of his job to take an interest in politics and all that; people think he's potty, but they do listen a bit."

"But everybody likes music," replied Monica insincerely, as she cared for it not at all.

"Likes! yes, likes. As they like chocolate and revues. No, Miss Oakley, people care for music as little as for musicians. They despise us, even more than the painters; somehow the organ-grinder's lower down than the pavement artist. Oh, it's because they don't know." His voice grew soft and fervent. "It makes me unhappy to find them deaf to the language of life. To think that people can listen to the adagio in Beethoven's Sonata in F — and they don't cry! They don't dance with the 'Pastorale!' They hear the second movement of the 'Moonlight', and they don't crow and clap their hands. Oh, they've sung in vain — Brahms, Bach, Mozart, all of them — Do you think there'd be a David to sing and dance before the Tabernacle if they carried it to the Albert Hall?"

Monica laughed. She liked this dark, solemn young man, and it pleased her to feel the caress of his brown eyes. So she led him to talk on; she was soothed by the full, throaty voice that rose and fell in metric cadences.

Behind them walked Miss Moss, with Quin, stopping often by the wayside, for the girl was teaching the Londoner the names of the wild flowers.

"What's that?" she asked.

"A baby thistle," plunged Quin.

"Not at all. It's Knapweed."

"Knapweed. Good. Knapweed. I'll remember."

"You'd better," said Miss Moss, soft and severe. "I shan't tell you more than three times." She was very lovely, white-skinned, black-haired, with immense eyes brown as a pool in shadow. She stirred the young man. "And that," said Miss Moss, bending to pluck a tiny purple flower, "I couldn't expect you to know that. It's ground ivy."

"Ground ivy," he repeated vaguely, enraptured by her warm softness.

"Yes. And look as if you were attending."

"I can't," he muttered. "You're the only flower the name of which I shall remember forever."

"Don't be absurd." But she smiled, and for some time they went in silence, through thickets of hazel.

"What's that?" he asked, determined to make her speak, if only to watch the movement of her vivid lips.

"Flowering nettle, ignoramus." She bent to pluck the little yellow pagoda, as did he. Their hands touched. Flushing, she turned away.

"We must go on, and catch up the others."

He seized her hand. His speech was thick with emotion. He drew her towards him.

"No!" she whispered, "no," suddenly taut. She was strong and removed. Quin did not understand the intense reserve of the women of her race; so tried again to clasp her. But she snatched her hand away. "No," she murmured, soft and hoarse. "No, Mr. Quin. There, don't look angry. Learn your lessons. That little purple thing, like a neglected sweet pea, that's vetch."

"I'm not angry," he murmured, and for a moment looked so forlorn that, with a sudden gesture of affection, of pity, the girl whispered:

"Wild thyme. Smell how sweet it is," and brushed her hand across his lips.

Far behind them, almost silent, full of mutual awareness, came Sylvia and March, who watched every movement of the deep shoulders in the green sweater, drew close and receded in distracted terror and delight. He recognised the thrall that settled over him: "Like a moth," he thought uneasily. "Like a moth." But he enjoyed the thrall, and Sylvia, conscious and secure,

flung side glances at the handsome face, that was narrow and thin. She was of those women who are stirred only by one whom they stir. Yet his silence disquieted her; the exquisite intensity of his abasement awoke in her an uncomfortable responsibility. She asked him questions, indiscreet questions; she was like a man who tears away a woman's veil in his haste to kiss her lips.

"I'm twenty-three," he replied.

"So'm I," murmured Sylvia, and felt their intimacy grow. "But somehow you don't seem it."

"Oh, well," he said, after a long time. "I haven't done with the 'Varsity yet. I'm not grown up, I suppose." He felt very humble. "You can't understand, Mrs. Jervaulx; my people — they're old-fashioned, rather."

"Tell me about them," said Sylvia. She was not without design; she knew that men talk willingly of themselves, yet she was honest in that moment: she wanted to know all he would tell, that nervous boy. Like a lovely, shying horse.

"There's nothing to tell," said March, defending his modesty.

But Sylvia fixed on him eyes that smouldered with cupidity. Phrase by phrase she drew from him a picture of the old couple in the North, — rich, idle, sunken in local charity, isolated by Puritanic disapproval of their neighbours, and loving Oliver March with Mosaic pride and cruelty.

"They mean well," said the youth. "But father wanted me to be good. When I was a kid he used to lick me quite three times a week."

"What a shame!"

"No — that is — oh, it's so good of you," he cried, and she thought she saw a tear on the lashes that shadowed

the flushed cheek. "Nobody but you ever wanted to know about me."

Sylvia felt her heart grow large in her breast. They were passing a curtain of willows. Nobody could see them. But no; she was not afraid of that. She was afraid of giving way to her impulse. She was glad, as if escaped, when they reached the open field. She walked quickly, to rejoin the others.

Already the party was noisily unpacking the hampers which Temple had brought in the car; Miss Jesmond at once organised with great violence. Seeking the picturesque she had prohibited thermos flasks; she was full of orders:

"Mr. Oakley, please find a couple of big stones. And dead wood. We shall want more dead wood. Go and fine some wood, Mr. Moss."

"What! burn the home of a hamadryad!" Mr. Moss was shocked.

"You mean the home of a woodlouse. Now hurry up. Louise, where are the matches? Monica, you might set out the plates; and Mr. Quin, try and look busy even if you aren't."

The party was immensely noisy as it gathered in a clearing round the big stones upon which the kettle boiled over a pile of twigs. The foliage was still young and threw slight shadows; the birch leaves alone moved softly. The company laughed at everything, ate enormously of jam sandwiches, fruit salad, brown bread crumbling under caviare, great spoonfuls of clotted cream, and strawberries, cherries; the kettle bubbled and hissed; they filled tumblers of cider cup that rattled with ground ice.

"Ah!" cried Quin, "three cheers for Epicurus, for Apollo! No! for Dionysus, whom the barbarians term

Bacchus. Hail, son of Semele! press for us the grape of Naxos, scent the honey of Hymettus. . . ."

"Shut up!" roared in concert the other undergraduates, ". . . let thy staff with pine-cone crowned and entwined in ivy . . ."

Then almost everybody flung wood, bread and sugar at the revellers. March, who sat silent and enchained by Sylvia's side, flung himself upon Quin, thus escaping his exquisite bonds. But as Quin still bellowed rhetoric they smacked him with napkins, thrust a spoon down his back and filled his hair with burrs. At last he released himself and gravely remarked:

"There was a young fellow of Udimore . . ."

"Limericks!" cried Sylvia, forgetting March. She adored limericks, especially limericks for two. For some time the limerick club argued ferociously.

"Who'd plumbed this old world to the core," suggested Stephen.

"Rot!" cried March, still a free man.

"He said: To succeed, You must bathe in the Brede" . . . volunteered Miss Moss.

"You just stick to woman's sphere," said her brother rudely. "Here, I've got it: But a pair of grey eyes, That were deep as the skies . . ."

A yell of derision interrupted him, but Monica blushed. She was happy; a heat mist hung in the trees; she could hear Louise and Miss Jesmond talking clothes.

"No," said Miss Jesmond firmly. "A theatrical dressmaker will always overdo it when it comes to an afternoon dress. But there's nobody like them for evening frocks."

Monica's eyes met Stephen's. He smiled. How lovable he was. For a moment she watched Quin, a little jealously; Miss Moss had hung a cherry from a twig and

was angling over the young man's face. He snapped at the fruit as a trout at a fly; the girl flung back her swelling neck as she laughed. She did not see March flush as he handed Sylvia a tumbler of cider cup and for a second touched her finger tips.

Soon the party straggled through the wood into the fields. The loveliness of the afternoon repressed the crudity of their youth; they marvelled at the delicacy of the grasshoppers and picked shy columbine. A corner of the field was thick with pink campion; the men plucked great bunches of it and wreathed in the blossoms the heads of the girls, who laughed and protested. Then all stopped before a wild-rose bush, laden with vermilion puffballs of blight. Quin plucked a long branch, wove it into a thorny crown, which he hung as a votive offering upon the lowest bough of an oak.

"How beautiful it is," he said, as he fingered the soft, scarlet home of the insect, "and yet it's just blight! How Elizabethan! Moss! let us sing to it—"

Slowly he composed the lines, while Moss sung a lilting melody:

"Blight upon the roses, blight in May,
(Merrily, merrily)
Mother and daughter of my own decay,
(Drearily, drearily)
Rosy is my quarry, rosy is her lip,
(Rosily, rosily)
Dewy is her fragrance, dew from her I sip,
(Dewily, dewily)."

* * * * *

They went slowly through the fields. The sun was sinking beyond the ridge, picking out in black the squat tower of Brede church. Sylvia and March had outstripped the others; they were followed only by the dis-

tant voices and the young laughter upon the cooling wind. Silently they passed into the curtain of willows beyond which ran a brook, walking fast, as if escaping, as if determined to defeat themselves by flight. But, just as they were about to pass beyond the willows, they stopped as in accord, for a moment paused as if asking of each other an impossible respite. Then, with a little shiver, Sylvia seized the fair, shrinking head, drew it down, and with a little cry, half joyful, half despairing, pressed her lips to his. The youth cried out as she clasped him, his conquest and his conqueror.

XX

With a deft, half-automatic movement Monica seized the long wooden mould in which were sunk the twenty little cambric bags which had just been placed at her side. Her right hand, that rested on the wooden lever of the press, brought down the wooden plunger just as the mould, sliding between its wooden guides, placed itself so that the first recess received the stroke of the plunger. It had fascinated her, this work, in the beginning, so apparently easy, so exacting in accuracy. In the early days, nearly two months before, when hers had been the mean tasks, the endless weighing of the small T. N. T. charges, later the equally monotonous loading of the cambric bags with their exquisitely correct charges, she had sometimes looked at the press girls with the respect that overcomes a G. P. when a Harley Street specialist speaks. For pressing demanded the development of multifarious instincts. When she brought in the loaded moulds she sometimes wasted a minute, until the charge hand fussed and began to stare at her. It was fascinating to watch the presser slide the mould

under the plunger, so exactly that the plunger would not catch the edges of the wooden die, and bring down the lever as if she were thinking of something else. There was not a sixteenth of an inch to spare, and this acrobat never failed. She did not catch the edges; her stroke never failed; there was hardly any noise save the swift, consecutive thuds as the plunger came down, pressing to its exact length and density the little charge — it was like a conjuring trick. Monica had almost a sense of emptiness when the twenty were done. The sudden interruption of the rapid, harmonious movement, essence of perfect industrial work, left her suspended.

"It's a long time ago," she thought, as her hands, undirected by her brain, pulled at the lever and pushed forward the mould. "It's easy," she thought. "I'm a machine now, I suppose."

She did not dislike being a machine. The continuous, regular work that left her mind unencumbered, satisfied in her the need for occupation. Without knowing it, she had been rather unhappy and very bored at Knapenden during those two years, when she had played with the war at relief centres. Now, every day, from eight to six, with an hour off for dinner, she felt in it, and somehow the war oppressed her less. By gaining contact with it, she was half escaping it. Miss Livingstone was right the other day when she said: "The war! we've got nothing to do with the war. All we care about is munitions."

Indeed Monica found munitions strangely impersonal. She could not connect these little bags with fire and death. She filled them with T. N. T., just as she might have filled tins with tomatoes. They had become just things. And she liked her little charges; they had idiosyncracies, troubles of their own; the fine powder

was wayward as a poet. Indeed, at that moment, she struck one of the strange moods of the explosive. Her newly sensitive right hand told her as the plunger came down that the stroke was short. She stopped and turned to Miss Hayes, who, at the end of the shop, was gauging test samples. Answering her look, Miss Hayes came to the bench.

"What is it?" she said.

Monica pointed to the plunger sunken into the mould. There was a gap of one eighth of an inch between the edge of the mould and the course stroke of the plunger.

"Oh," said Miss Hayes, "grade's varying again. It's really too bad of them to expect us to put this coarse stuff through. Let me have a try." Shifting the mould forward, Miss Hayes pressed the next bag. Again the plunger failed to travel its course. "Oh, well," she said, "put it aside. What is the lot number?"

"F.16," said Monica, turning up the mould to see the label.

Miss Hayes flushed with annoyance. She had soft dark eyes and beautiful curly brown hair, which no cap could restrain, but the length and flatness of her chin revealed a secret hot temper.

"It's too bad, it's really too bad, I've told shop twice this morning to stop the F.16. I'll go to unit about it," she cried, as she violently pulled at the wooden swing door.

"Cheero," said Monica's neighbour, as she pushed away her mould, "mine's F.16, too. Girls, girls, it's a blooming bank holiday." One after another they pushed aside the moulds loaded with the unworkable explosive.

"Let's have a sing-song, girls," bellowed Monica's neighbour. She was good-looking, but rather stout; Monica found the pink and white cheeks and brilliant

yellow hair irresistible, and she adored the mischievous little amber eyes.

"Miss Badger," said a girl on the other side, "I'm surprised at you."

But Miss Badger (for this was the fair-haired girl), was taking no notice, slid back her bench, and without regard for factory regulations dumped to the right and left of her mould two enormous, felt-shod feet, tilted, and clasping her hands behind her head, luxuriously expanded her vast bust, and in a sepulchral bellow began:

"I want to go back,
I want to go back,
I want to go to Tennessee."

"Shut up! Hold yer row!" came from various parts of the shop. "You wait, if Maisie-Aisie catches you!"

"This is my day out," remarked Miss Badger.

"I want to go back,
I want to go back,
I want to go to Tennessee."

"Ain't she a cure?" said Miss Penn, who owned the ugliest nose, the worst teeth, and the greatest speed and conscientiousness of the whole shop.

Then Pollie Westfield leapt up from her bench, rushed across to the singer, and tempted by her attitude brought down a violent hand upon her stomach.

"Gaw!" roared Ivy Badger, leaping up with a great pretence of fury, "girls, let me get at her, only let me *get* at her. You watch me make her so as her mother wouldn't know her."

Miss Penn and a big dark girl on the other side hurled themselves on Miss Badger, who stamped and roared,

mouthing comic furious faces, and breathing threats of the most anatomical kind, the least of which was the scattering of Pollie Westfield's liver to the four winds.

A sudden scurry, a line of patient white backs before the moulds. Miss Hayes came in, rather rigid and discontented, close followed by Tinker, a small girl who called them to the outside gangway for the ten o'clock milk.

"Hooray!" roared Miss Badger (for this particular meal was recognized as an occasion for license), "here we are again. Pledge me girls in the famous Cottenham milk, straight from the pump."

Even Miss Hayes smiled. The girls crowded round Tinker and drank hurriedly. This was not a recognized meal, to be taken only outside the clean area, but still they were not supposed to waste time, and did not drink while at work, for fear that T. N. T. dust should fall into the beverage. While Miss Badger drank up, making as much noise as she could, in imitation as she put it of the elephant when about to baa, Monica reflected that her fellow workers were really a jolly crowd. In this big, clean factory she felt happy, useful; so far as work can help a woman she felt complete. And while she waited for the new lot of T. N. T. she went off into meditations so vague that she could not say what she was thinking about.

Suddenly a noise entered her consciousness. It was not the regular noise from the proof yard, where rapid cracks signalized that caps were being tested, nor the frequent dull rumble from the Woolwich sheds miles away. It was a sudden, heavy, muffled noise, close by, a noise she had never heard before. It terrified her by its unfamiliarity, and the silence that followed was more terrifying. She found herself staring at the other girls,

whose eyes too had widened; Miss Hayes seemed to be listening like a dog in the wind. Not a word was said, and the tension grew abominable. Monica found herself holding on to the edge of the table with cold, twisted fingers.

So, some seconds later, it was almost a relief to hear a bell begin to ring, then another, and yet another, until the air was filled with the ringing of bells.

"The fire bell," said Miss Hayes quietly. "Go to your benches and wait for orders."

As the girls obediently sat down, Miss Hayes went to the door, opened it, and taking out the wedge, as directed in Article 1 of Fire Regulations, maintained it open and stood in the doorway so as not to obstruct movement on the gangway.

Monica, seated and waiting, tried to see through the window what was happening. It was horrible that nothing should be happening. The tram girls had left their trolleys on the gangways. There was nothing to be seen, except at the door of each shop the charge hand at attention. It seemed to last minutes. And still all the bells were ringing. It struck Monica that there was no emotion in bells.

Suddenly, as if in receipt of a signal, all the charge hands turned to their shops. Monica ceased to be a spectator, for Miss Hayes was marshalling her girls and marching them through the inspection room towards the shift house.

Marvellously she came in the rear: "Left! right!" she cried, a pleasant military automaton. Monica was not afraid yet. It was very like fire drill. But, as she entered the inspection room in time to see the last Woolwich girl passing out, her heart gave a leap, her knees felt weak. For, one after the other, she heard three sep-

arate explosions, and for a moment the windows on the right were lit up by a red glare.

"Steady," said Miss Hayes, with a lovely steadiness in her own voice.

But in the change house there was a moment of confusion, for their group collided with the tail of the inspection column, as the latter stopped to make way for the girls from the press shop. In that moment of stoppage Monica, for the first time in her life, knew the feeling of blind terror. It was rather dark. There were no windows along the sides. She was penned in with these eighty girls and in a horrible silence. "No panic," she murmured to herself, and was conscious that there were a great many of them in the room and that the door looked terribly small.

Then they were outside, marching towards the gate, along the gangway that seemed so narrow and so long. For a moment she felt an impulse to break away, leap the barrier into the dirty area, and run across the swampy ground, but she dug her nails into her palms. Monica was not romantic: nothing within her took up the old battle cry of her fathers, but a training made up of class implications compelled her to keep down her impulse just because it was an impulse.

Then she felt her nails go deeper into her skin, for not a hundred yards away a sheet of flame rose on the other side of "B" Division, and to the accompaniment of a roaring noise that terrified her she saw things in the air, things that flamed and smoked, that fell on the roofs of "B" Division, and, worst of all, large dark things which, she dully realised, seemed to be writhing in the air . . .

And still they were marching along those endless gangways . . . She saw smoke rise in grey streams from the

roofs of " B " . . . Hot ashes and little burning fragments of wood fell over the procession . . . She was conscious of Ivy Badger behind her *laughing* . . .

Just as they passed the " B " gangway the whole shop went up. It seemed to happen progressively: the walls caved outwards, making strange, broken shapes with their purple and green camouflage lit up by flames. She saw the gangway crumble and fall smoking into the swamp, and with a sudden sickness had a vision of a string of girls, passing out of " B ", at first lit up, then falling singly, or crumpled in smoking groups with the caving walls. She heard screams, and as the roofs fell in, a more shocking silence.

It was then she saw the men behind " B " Division, the fire engines already at work — she was conscious of two toy engines racing towards the factory along the Borstal Road. The unit foreman, followed by two other men, running with incredible rapidity along the " A " gangway, which was still safe. But a panic seemed to have gained her neighbours; somebody was shoving her; she struck out savagely, and it delighted her to feel her elbow enter the softness of a body! A cry rose up, " Let's get out." She had a glimpse of the girls, breaking away, leaping into the swamp, running. She too was running, towards " A " Division, she did not know why, one of hundreds of little figures now beyond the hold of discipline. Some men were on " A " gangway still, signing to the girls to turn back. But Monica found her brain without ideas; she did not know where she was running to, but she could not stop. And the repeated explosions that came now one after the other deprived her of all power to think. She heard a loud hiss from the river as the fire barge came up and began to spout water at " A " Division in the hope of protecting it against falling embers. But

as for a moment she stood alone, she saw a long trail of red-hot ashes fall on the last shed. She did not think, gave herself no commands. She found herself leaping the barrier, rushing into the deserted shed, tugging at the extinguisher that was too heavy for her. She dragged, and she strained. As she hauled it to the door she was single of purpose. All she thought was: "If I can get it out, we may just do it." Then somebody seized her by the waist.

"Get out, get out at once," said a voice, "give it to me, don't be a fool." And strong hands dragged her out of the shed with a certain brutality. She felt herself thrown out by a violent thrust between the shoulder blades, but she was more conscious of the thump-thump of the extinguisher as the man dragged it across the floor. Hardly conscious, she was outside, held up by a man who had his arm round her waist.

"The extinguisher," she murmured feebly.

"It's all right," said a voice roughly, but it was a kind voice.

She listened to the extinguisher hissing. She found herself crying a little. She was too weak to shrink when, with a dominating roar, the cordite magazine went up. She was thankful for the anonymous arm which still held her up. . . .

Towards the afternoon Frank Cottenham stood meditatively in the swamp. Half the factory still smoked gently; the firemen were negligently playing on the blue volutes of smoke that rose straight in the warm air. Superficially, he was most unhappy. Two hundred yards away the St. John's Ambulance people were still passing with stretchers on which lay horribly blackened, shapeless things.

"My God!" he said, "are there any more?"

With staring eyes he watched the procession.

"Eighty-three, eighty-four, eighty-five. That's the lot, I suppose. No, good Lord! here are some more!" He turned away so as not to see what it was the labourers were dragging out from the fallen gangway of "B" Division, but suddenly his agony was overwhelmed by a feeling of preoccupation and delight, a feeling which had been calling to him through those three hours of terrible activity. He could still feel her suppleness in the hollow of his arm. He wished that her tears still lay wet upon his hand. Dishonestly, he said to himself:

"She's a brick. I really ought to go and see how she's doing."

He hurried towards "F" building, converted into a temporary hospital, turning away from the endless row of objects upon the stretchers; many moved uneasily, some were moaning. Cottenham would not have minded so much on a battle-field, but these were girls, and this outraged his deepest affection. Still, he had to look if he was to find her, and it did not strike him that this was poetic justice, that his search for the woman he desired compelled him to look into the tortured faces of all those other women.

He found her at last, unhurt, sitting limply in an arm-chair in the sick room. How white she looked! and how exquisite! She had taken off her cap, and so for the first time he saw the red-brown hair. She looked at him as if she did not know him, and this surprised him. It seemed incredible that he should not be as familiar to her thoughts as she had been to his. So he felt embarrassed, a feeling unusual in him when in the presence of a woman. He faltered:

"I say — I just wanted to know how you are."

"I'm all right, thanks," said Monica.

He paused. Somehow he had not expected her voice to be pitched like that.

"I mean — well, you did a very brave thing, a silly thing, but then I suppose all those things are either brave or silly. They're silly if they don't come off."

Monica looked at him without replying. She knew him by sight, and was interested by his good looks, his well-groomed alertness.

"Oh, well," she said, "it isn't worth making a fuss about. To tell you the truth I don't know what I did."

Cottenham looked at her with growing surprise.

("Hang it all! the girl talked like a lady. Well, time would show. And her hands! extremely dirty, but not a working-girl's hands.")

"Do you mind telling me your name?" he said, and as if to prevent misunderstanding: "I have to know your name, you see, because we have to report every detail."

"Monica Oakley."

"Oh! Miss Monica Oakley." He made a note of it. "Well, Miss Oakley, I think you'll hear a little more about this. I don't think I ought to say any more, as no doubt you're very shaken and would like to go home, but I think I may say that the factory will feel — that it ought to recognise your, may I say, your intelligence and courage."

Monica made a gesture of deprecation. It struck him as full of grace.

"I think we shall probably ask you to take charge of a shop, when we start again on what is left of our poor old factory, but I won't worry you now. Of course, it will be a few days before work begins again. Well, — " he felt awkward, "well, good morning, Miss Oakley."

Monica, very tired, watched him walk away. She was not now unhappy or terrified; she was not conscious of

the all-surrounding pain and death. She found her idle mind occupied by a new interest. He had a pleasant voice, she thought, and somehow he was both shy and brave. His blue eyes sometimes had stared hers down, and sometimes eluded her. It made her wonder whether he was usually shy, and bold with her, or usually bold, but shy with her. It was an irritating speculation. She felt too worn to get up and go away. She wanted to sleep as she sat, but this new idea would not let her alone. She tried to drive it away as she grew sleepier, but still the problem of Cottenham imposed itself. "It's like trying to go to sleep when you've got indigestion," she thought. But, little by little, as the needs of her body asserted themselves, she went to sleep, her waking brain shepherded to the last by this idea, which, as she grew drowsy, became less insistent, became vague as a distant song.

XXI

The feeling of distracting companionship which had been his for the last few days grew less insistent as Cottenham, leaving the car at the garage, walked round his house towards the front door. In the warm May evening, framed in a sky pale as running water, his house filled him with a sense of harmony that made him love it so. It was not a very large house: it stood on a slight rise, three miles up the Medway from the Cottenham works, low, square, one of those solemn Georgian houses with the flat, friendly façade of red brick, the white-framed windows, the flat roof. Not very old, built about 1770 by some local gentleman, it had come into the hands of the Cottenhams in the early 'sixties when the works were formed. But though it was only his grandfather's house, Frank Cottenham felt naturalised to it, to the

thick hedges of clipped box and golden privet, the flagged paths grown with rock plants, the old gnarled vine, and the still older lavender bush that sprang from stems thick as a man's wrist.

As he closed the door behind him, he was received by those sounds which to him meant home. On his right, in the drawing-room, Julia was playing. He knew the piece well, the Toccata of Paradies. He loved the Toccata, its gay disregard of life's responsibility. He listened for a long time, hat in hand:

> "Some men married, married for gold
> And some for their heart's desire.
> Some left their hearts to wither and wilt,
> And many had nothing to give . . ."

cried the Toccata. "Ah! Toccata of my dreams," thought Cottenham, "how you understand life!" Fascinated, he waited for the recurrent motif which sums up the immortal little melody:

> "But I didn't care, I didn't care,
> For languid and light was I!
> And I didn't care, and I didn't care . . ."

He sighed. Oh! sunny Toccata! Was it really like that in seventeenth-century Italy?

Julia stopped, but almost at once began to play another familiar tune, a Pavane of Locatelli. Forcing himself a little, for he wanted to see his children, Cottenham went upstairs, followed all the way by the mock solemnity of the Pavane that prisons the gossamer, cabins the cloud. For a moment he stopped in the night-nursery, where Rupert, his mouth wide open, lay asleep. He was a large, fine baby, dark like his mother, but it pleased Cottenham to think that under the veined eyelids lay eyes blue as his

own. Then Rupert stirred in his sleep, and with apparently enormous effort disengaged an arm and a fat brown fist which he waved with beautiful helplessness. Cottenham bent down to kiss the soft warm cheek that was velvety and sweet-scented. Adorable, fat Rupert.

Then, treading carefully, he went into the day-nursery, where Nurse, tight-featured and businesslike, and inclined to bully the under-nurse, was preparing Diana and Lucretia for bed. Their father came in just in time to still a disturbance, for on this brilliant evening both little girls looked upon bed as an outrage; Lucretia, aged five, was lying on her back, kicking, bellowing that she would never get up again, while Diana's features were resolving themselves into a system of corkscrews which promised tears. But, at the sight of Cottenham, the two children gave a shrill cry of delight, ran, seized him. Diana, who was heavy for her six years, nearly pulled him over by suddenly clutching the slack of his coat and declaring that he was a swing.

"Now, Miss Diana," said Nurse ferociously, "no swings to-night. Come here at once."

"Let me have them for a moment, Nurse," said Cottenham humbly.

"Very well, Sir," said the expert, obviously indignant. "I think ten minutes will be quite enough, Sir." And motioning her subordinate away, she left the room, while Cottenham sat down and his two little daughters jumped one on to each knee, trying to come down on him as heavily as they could, for that was part of the game. In that moment he knew complete delight. The two little bodies clasped in his arms were so active. Their hearts, he thought, beat quicker than other people's.

"Well, darlings," he murmured between the two dark heads, "what shall we do?"

"A story," said Diana breathlessly.

"The story about the night when the china cat walked," said Lucretia.

"No," said Diana, "I know that story. I want the story about the fairy that says ping-pang in the telephone."

"The story about the china cat," said Lucretia indignantly.

"Hush," said Cottenham, "or Nurse'll come back. I'll tell you a new story. A story you have never heard before."

The two little girls opened enormous, dark, fascinated eyes. A new story!

"Once upon a time there was a man who had a brain of gold. When he was a little boy he had a very large head, because there was such a lot of gold in it. It was a nuisance, rather, because his head was heavy, and sometimes when he ran he used to fall down and hurt himself."

"Did he fall when he went downstairs?" asked Lucretia.

"Very likely."

"Did he fall on his nose?" asked Diana.

"Yes, he was always falling about, but don't interrupt. Now, one day, when he had fallen down, as he picked himself up, he saw that he had cut his head a little.—Oh, he hadn't hurt himself much," cried Cottenham as he saw a tremor of sympathy pass over Diana's face, "only a very, very little. And when he got up he saw that there had fallen from his head two or three little scraps of gold. So he picked them up and took them to his master. And his master said to him: 'Algernon, I am very pleased with you for giving me these. I am so pleased that you shan't do any sums to-day. . . .'"

The two little girls clung and stared, as Cottenham went to the end of the old French story. They did not quite understand the end, when the man with the golden brain has spent nearly all of it on friendship and love, and holds out in a blood-stained hand the last scraps of that golden brain to the woman who was faithless to him. But they were quiet when Nurse came back, and kissed their father with soft little cool lips. He went away thinking, without connecting the thought with anything else:

"This is the best thing in the world. It is not a thing to risk." Then he added: "You damned sentimentalist," and went to his dressing room.

The impression that this was the best thing in the world clung to him throughout the evening. How lovely Julia was! and how strange that after seven years of marriage he should still discern her loveliness. She was tall, almost too slim: something of the Italian greyhound about her narrow arms, delicate ankles and wrists. That night she was wearing a new frock, always a sure passport to his approval. And a beautiful frock. Over her shoulders, though widely cut away round the neck, hung a masculine, but armless coat of black velvet, edged all round with an embroidered pattern of golden bees. The thin body was clad in a corselet of heavy brocade, striped black and gold, and caught up towards the breast. The skirt also of striped brocade broke on her narrow knees. Upon her breast lay a cabochon ruby. Yes, she was very lovely. He felt it right to congratulate her; admiration is a duty.

"Do you really like it?" asked Julia, a little anxiously, for she respected her husband's taste, which was excellent.

"Yes, you don't always bring it off, but this is It."

"I hesitated about that brocade. Don't you think it's rather heavy?"

"No. What did you think of? Crêpe georgette?"

"Some sort of crêpe."

"It's quite as well you let it alone. Crêpe's so flimsy," said Cottenham. "Besides, when you go in for those light stuffs, chiffon, say, as nowadays you've got to use the same material all the way down, you get the line too long. You want a broader effect."

They discussed the frock for some time, then passed on to a projected coat and skirt. They even had a difference of opinion, for Mrs. Cottenham had determined on gabardine, while her husband wanted to experiment with something rough like hopsack. They were united, those two, by many interests, of which clothes and music were perhaps the strongest. After dinner Julia played again, but the old unsteadiness recaptured her husband, and after a while he went into his study. For a long time he remained with his chin in his hand. Then his thought found expression:

"How beautiful she is! What a savage, in a way. How lucky for her that she's dark. If she'd been pink and white she'd have tried to express that wild soul of hers, and colours would have made her absurd." He brooded for a moment over the temperament of his wife, still foreign, because it was so fitful, so jealous, so passionate, in every way animal, and so strangely attractive to him, who was rather fadedly gay, cynical in presence of his own emotions, kindly, negligent, sentimental, and sensual in the mind rather than the body. His thoughts took another turn:

"I'd better let that girl alone. Yes, but can I let her alone? I think I'll get her sacked. It's about the only way." Then his subtle familiar murmured: "Nonsense!

Why sack her? It isn't fair. The girl's done you no harm. Besides, it'll be all right. In the ordinary way you never go near the shops. The chances are you'll never see her again; so don't worry."

But the next day, and this filled him with a sort of shame, he found himself, as if by chance, in the car pulled up near the canteen, improvised in the Admiralty building. He wanted to see her, and he knew it. But as the girls came out he started the car. He was afraid to see her. All that day he tried to anæsthetise himself with work, of which there was abundance, for three out of the seven divisions of the factory were burnt down to the piles, and there was enough struggling with contractors, barge and railway companies, let alone an impending lawsuit against the insurance company, to drive out of his mind the thought of any woman. But, all through, that thought clung to him. "It's like a fishhook," he said to himself. "Damn her."

At six o'clock came news. Something had happened near Jutland; judging from the Admiralty statement the fleet had got rather the worst of it. For a moment the idea that the British fleet had been beaten drove everything else from his mind. It was only a few minutes later that he realised with horror that even such an event could not entirely annul the other preoccupation.

Much later that evening, at half-past ten, he told Irvine that he could work no more. As he walked through the silent building he passed through the staff office. On a shelf stood two heavy registers marked "Staff." He hesitated for a moment, then, looking back to see if Irvine had followed him, he hurriedly took down the volume marked "N–Z." Hurriedly he opened it. Ah! here it was. Only one Oakley, luckily. Then he stared — 182, Castle Hill. Castle Hill? Rochester?

This was incredible. He knew the street well, the street of fine houses that ran down alongside the Castle towards the bridge. No, really, munition girls earning thirty-four bob a week didn't live in Castle Hill. "After all," he said to himself savagely, "what the devil do I care where she lives?"

But he did not turn the car towards the south. In a few minutes he passed Fort Clarence and turned into the broad street. He left the car and walked up. In the black darkness of the military area he could not be quite sure of Number 182, but it must be one of those two substantial houses. Of course no lights could be seen. Yet one of those was her window.

Cottenham stood for a long time. His hands clasped behind him, he thought:

"Sentimental fool. Cub. You're thirty-nine, and you go and stare at a girl's window just as you used to go round in the evening and stare at the light on the top floor of the pastry-cook's in the Corn. But it can't be helped. Frank, old boy, you're going to get into trouble. She won't have anything to do with you, and if she does it'll be still worse. She's not just one of the hands. She won't take it easy. She's pukka. If she listens to you at all she'll take it hard. The real thing, you know, a clean bolt. And you won't be able to meet her, and if you do meet her you'll get caught. And Julia will suspect. And there'll be a devil of a row. And you'll get sick of her just about the time when she gets fond of you. And you'll jolly well wish you'd let her alone — but, my poor old Frank, I'm afraid you won't."

XXII

"IRVINE," said Cottenham, "this afternoon at three o'clock I want to see the charge hands."

"Oh," said the Manager, "what's wrong?"

"Nothing. But the way things are going we shall never get properly started again unless we can get more labour. The Labour Exchange is not sending anybody, is it?"

"Well, we had five girls in this morning. Of course they're a bit scared, but they'll settle down."

"That's all very well," said Cottenham, "but how long are they going to take to settle down? You're no psychologist, Irvine; when a factory's had seventy-two killed and two hundred and ten wounded a fortnight before, well! girls don't mob the place for a job when they can go across the river and make uniforms and lead a quiet life. Since we went up the girls have been shy everywhere. It's the same story at Curtis's and Harvey's, and at Woolwich too. Otherwise we're all right. I see that Humphreys are running up the shanties in double quick time, and we seem to have got the right priority. We shall have a unit up in a week, do you think?"

"Yes. I should think about a week. We ought to be more or less O. K. in about five weeks."

"Except as to labour. That's why I'm going to have the charge hands in, and I'm going to orate. Tickle up their patriotism, you know. Show 'em how stuck-up they ought to be because they haven't been killed. All the usual talk about the fellows out there risking every day what they ought to be proud to risk. I want to turn them into recruiting sergeants. If every charge hand brings us three girls, we shall start up that unit next week, and then things will move."

The meeting took place at three o'clock, in the Club, a large building near the Chalk Pit. The forty girls came in, rather self-conscious and solemn, pleased because this was a sort of reception, and of course they were wearing their outdoor clothes. There was a good deal of quiet giggling, and Cottenham felt very much looked at. A shrill whisper reached him: "*I* think he's just sweet." How adorable women were! But as they settled down he felt uneasy and discontented until at last he met two deep grey eyes. He needed all his experienced wisdom not to give her a little smile of recognition. It was a brief address. Cottenham sketched out the history of the Works, pointing out that most of them were new hands, but still they had entered an organisation which had always maintained model relations with its employees, that the management were associated with the workers in half a dozen ways, sick clubs, holiday clubs, sports and games, and doubtless as time went on the association might become still more democratic. Briefly, it was a question of holding together. A calamity had occurred; such things were inevitable in explosive works. Everything was done to avoid them, and no doubt his audience knew that accidents were very rare. Still, it had happened, and the only thing to do was for everybody to do their best to pull the business together.

"And that," he said, "we cannot do without more labour. Just now we are four hundred and ten girls short. A number, as you know, perished in the explosion, but the great majority of the missing are girls who are frightened and haven't come back. Oh, I quite understand it; it's enough to frighten anybody. But still I think we must remember that we in England are in a comparatively happy state. The enemy is kept

from you by millions of men who are every day, and all day, risking death from those explosives which you make. They take their risk. Can we not take a much smaller risk? "

He met Monica's eyes, and took a more lyrical turn: " The essence of human life, the thing that makes it adventurous and lovely, is just that triumph of our spirit over our natural craven nature. We are afraid of pain and privation; we develop only when with open eyes we decide to face that pain and that privation. Life cannot crown a human being until that being risks his throne." He felt that he was soaring too high. " So what I want is your help. I know you agree with me, or you would not be here, you would not have come back; I want every one of you to speak to-night to her friend, to her friend's friend, to bring them back to the work that is necessary if the country is to supply the armies that will make its cause prevail. I want you to bring in labour. To feel that you are all of you true soldiers and to do a bigger bit than ever now you have to win the battle of England."

There was a little cheering, and Cottenham searched his mind for a phrase with which to finish his speech. He found Monica's eyes serious and intent upon him. It was as if they drove him into a metaphysical region, for he said in a low, reflective voice: " When I say that I want labour to come into this factory, and coöperate with me to make it once more into an instrument of victory, I really mean coöperate. We live in times where the social order is changing, where labour is demanding its rightful share, not only of the goods of this world but of the control of industry. I am not one of those employers who will stand up against that; in the first place I am not going to stand in the way of the natural evolution of things, which is producing an educated worker,

and is therefore making for a time when the educated worker will share the control of the works. Indeed, during our lifetime, we may see a social order where, in a sense, there will be no employers and no employees, where the control of all industry will be in the hands of those who work at it, where they will form a community working in each other's interest, because the interest of each one is the interest of all, where also each industry will be working for the State which assists it, because the interest of each industry is the same as the interest of the State. How the change will come I do not know. Syndicalists, Guild Socialists, tell you that it will come by violence, and that may be; I think rather that it will come from a clearer realisation that the chief right of every man and woman is the right to their share in the common responsibility." He stopped. Then, looking only into Monica's eyes he said: "Dreams perhaps. It may be that what I see there is only dreams, but I cannot help thinking that dreams are the stuff that worlds are made of."

As that evening Monica sat sewing, she cast a balance sheet of her present life. She sewed badly, but she liked the half-automatic exercise of thread and needle; she made blouses mainly, but never wore them, for they were always a failure, and so from time to time Lady Oakley distributed them to the genteel poor of Rye. It was characteristic of Monica that she did few things well with her hands. Early attempts at polite education had failed to teach her to draw, and she never ventured to play the piano in public, perhaps owing to that lack of manual dexterity, perhaps because there was no music in a temperament intellectual and humorous rather than emotional. At least it was not emotional yet. Monica was a garden enclosed, and perhaps because that night

something in her of which she had been conscious struggled for expression, she considered more closely her circumstances and herself. She was not unhappy, she reflected, in this house. The long hours at the factory, the new consciousness of identity with the common effort, which to her was warming like companionship, left her every night rather tired. She was not weak in constitution, though her pallor led many to think so, but when eight o'clock came, when she had washed, changed, quietly dined in her sitting room, reading a book all the while, she was willing enough to go to bed. Books, the introspective exercise of sewing, occasional visits to the Saltaires, her only friends at Rochester, hurried week-ends at Knapenden, complicated by a change at Maidstone and another at Ashford, filled her small leisure well enough.

She looked about her. These were not unpleasant rooms. They were large, for this was a Victorian house converted into lodgings. It belonged to a wharfinger's manager at Chatham, who had enlisted when the war broke out, the firm promising to pay his salary to his wife. As the wharfingers then promptly went bankrupt, she found that she could not pay her rent, and giving up gentility, settled down in the basement. The ground floor was inhabited by two elderly spinsters, one of them lame, who went out but little and pursued unknown occupations, the most audible of which was the recurrent sound of a singing kettle and clattering china; above their heads lived Monica, respected owner of the drawing-room floor; above, where the rooms were smaller, lived the head clerk of a factory at Stroud, with his wife and little girl. It was a quiet house. Monica's rooms were fairly newly papered, not overloaded with ornaments; in these two months they had been made more

her own by the erection of book shelves, and the loan of a Morland, to remind her of Knapenden, said Sir Hugh.

And so she sat sewing, sedate and serious, her clean white profile sharply outlined in the lamplight.

"It's queer," she thought, "the war goes on. Nothing much seems to happen. It might be going on for ever, and it's making a sort of ditch between what there used to be and what there will be." She found with surprise that she did not clearly remember things which happened in 1914, visits to town, picture shows, dances; it was all rather dim, much dimmer than were in 1914 things that had happened in 1912. "It's the war, I suppose," she thought. "Being so much bigger it has made other things smaller." She smiled at the thought. "I suppose that by the side of war it is difficult to remember even one's coming-out ball. The competition's too great."

Yet a few persons still lived in her consciousness, like hills rising out of the ground mist. She thought of men she had known, quite a lot of them. Men liked Monica, and many had seemed to harbour for her something more than liking, without ever coming to finality, as if at the last moment she frightened them; her good looks were perhaps too purely good; they made men uneasy, because her attraction was that of beauty rather than of prettiness, and so men drew back as often they do from beauty, because they tend to hate that which they do not comprehend. "The war," thought Monica, "seems to have taken everybody." She thought of Guy Langrick, that rowdy subaltern, who had so hurriedly married Sylvia, then fallen; of Jervaulx, Sylvia's second husband, in an infantry regiment, a P. B. I., as he put it (whatever that might mean). Would he survive? would anybody survive? There was Arthur Horton, for instance, so care-

less as to seem hard. Monica liked Lord Arthur; he was such a finished product, the tail end of a line of men who had never done any work, and devoted all their time to keeping themselves fit. Hunting, polo, shooting, golf, to say nothing of swimming, dumb-bells, and the punching ball, had kept Lord Arthur fit. She smiled, for there was something lovable in Horton. Once, when he had confessed this ambition to keep fit, she had asked him: "Fit for what?" "Oh, nothing," said Horton gaily. "Just fit." Abstract fitness was like abstract sanctity. Both were unsocial.

Well, he was badly wounded, and now he was engaged. He had told her this in a letter, adding that troubles never came singly. And Hurn? It seemed a long time since Hurn had written to her. What a long time ago, too, since she and Hurn had sat for a long time on the terrace of Knapenden, reading Pascal's "Pensées." What a serious young man Hurn was! but his seriousness pleased and almost moved her. He had the narrow face of a fanatic. In some moods Hurn seemed to want to seize the world by the throat to make it confess what life meant. "That fellow," Sir Hugh said, "would cheerfully go to the stake for Locke's 'Essay on the Human Understanding.'"

Monica supposed that she had had what might be called passages with Hurn, if the word passages expressed the dour intensity of his interest in her. She presumed that he had proposed to her on his last leave, when he harshly told her that she was the only woman who seemed real, and that unless he could have her by his side all the rest of his life he would feel incomplete. She had not replied. Well, it was not exactly a question. Also she would have found it difficult to say yes or no. It would have been interesting to marry Hurn;

one would never know whether he would not detonate. (In these days Monica thought in terms of explosives.)

He had not written for a long time. Three weeks. She missed his letters. They were not love letters; they were mainly war letters, like everybody else's, but every one was a revelation of James Hurn, of a man tortured by the desire to do the right, and much more so by his inability to discern it. In one letter he had revealed his preoccupation:

. . . "I wish the show would start. Perhaps I'd get a chance to do something. Somehow I think it would be better to be a dead V. C. than a living metaphysical jig-saw."

She did not want Hurn to become a dead V. C. She did not want any of the men she liked to get the V. C., the process was too dangerous. Let Hurn, and Stephen, and the others do their bit like everybody, yes, but they needn't overdo their bit. After all, the people who cared for them had rights as well as the country. Monica thought of the women who prevented their men from going, who hid them in cellars and haystacks. Of course she would not do things like that, but still Monica was a woman, not a diagram, and she knew that if she really cared, she would want her man to come back without his shield rather than on it. She wanted no more dead. Bobbie Marchmont was enough. Poor old Bob! How angry he was when she slung that half peach into his eye.

Her thoughts wandered to other men, to that new phantom of her mind, with the short, curly, brown hair, the pleasant alertness, the bright intelligent blue eyes. Interesting. In that phrase of his. How did it run? Yes: "dreams are the stuff that worlds are made of!" It seemed true. What a strange man to manage an explosive factory. Still, it had been in his family many

years. She supposed that he controlled it just as he would control any other business belonging to his family. That phrase of his was poetry; but then, when calling on the charge hands' *esprit de corps*, he had likened them to the prefects in a public school, spoken of his boyhood at Winchester. She supposed that the public schools were a better preparation for the manufacture of cordite than for the production of lyric poetry.

Still she sewed, and though her thoughts were vague they naturally centred round this man, as if for the first time her imagination had been stirred. She remembered the intensity of his eyes. Were they always intent like that? or had he indeed stared at her all the time? As soon as this question occurred to her, Cottenham suddenly developed a personal association with her. Yes, he had seemed to look only at her. Accident, of course. He did not know her. He had spoken to her only once after the fire. But romantic imagination would not so easily be set aside. Supposing he was aware of her as a woman? Well, it would not matter. She was not very likely to come across him again. A pity, in a way; he was attractive to her, and she wished that the Cottenhams and the Oakleys could know one another. She built a day-dream: she and Cottenham walking along Udimore Ridge towards the copse. He would be wearing smelly brown tweeds, and smoking a pipe, and she would be wearing her white linen coat and skirt. No, on second thoughts, it would be too cool in the late evenings. Her green coat and skirt would be better. Reville had made rather a success of that. And the sun would sink low beyond the green hump of Fairlight; he would say subtle, abrupt things . . .

Her dream was too purposeless for his marriage to trouble her, though she had seen Mrs. Cottenham once in

the car, waiting outside the works. How beautiful she was!

It would not matter, she thought, inconsequently. Doubly entrenched behind her unawakened purity and the standards of her class, it did not occur to her to question her own safety.

XXIII

Sir Hugh found his uncle in his garden, slowly smoking a large pipe. More than ever Charles Oakley looked eternal; he was tightly wedged in the armchair that had become rather too small for him. His dark face with the Oakley nose, the fine bridge of which had lost its sharpness as the fat of age collected about it, looked as if he were meditating, or as if he thought of nothing; it was impossible to tell which. He sat against the white wall, with the tall sunflowers growing behind, like soldiers with golden helmets, embowered amongst screaming dahlias, gladiolas insolently erect, shepherded upon the right by languid, tall hollyhocks, on the left by straight and sensual tiger lilies. He was as the leader of a battalion of flowers. He sat and brooded, and in the hot, still air rings rose and lingered above his pipe bowl. He moved not at all. He smoked, as it were, the pipe of eternity.

The old man was pleased to see his nephew, and for a time they talked of the rich garden, of the troubles inherent in it, of slugs that took cover craftily, of green-fly that swarmed, careless, in the public eye, of grafting new life on the old apple tree. Sir Hugh thought that in his bower the fat old man, slowly enjoying his tobacco, finding strength in the sunshine and the scents, soothed to

drowsiness by the humming of bees, was a modern Pan grown old, Pan with a touch of Silenus. But the charm could not endure. Looking out over Camber Castle towards the sea, they could see a little destroyer, swan-grey upon the ash-grey of the still water. She was far away, neither rose nor fell, but slowly steamed from the unknown of the west into the unknown of the east. Burly little ship with the tortured shape, bristling with appendages, guns, turrets, slim wireless, she was like a bulldog upon the water. She was purposeful, quiet, but capable, one felt, of the most businesslike murderousness. She was the war. So very soon they talked about the war.

They were not pessimistic; the Germans were still pressing Verdun, but Verdun did not fall; always Pétain seemed to retire, and still the city stood; it had stood so long that it must stand forever. The Germans had failed at Ypres, too.

"It's queer," said Sir Hugh, "those two towns are hardly towns, I suppose. Just smoking dust by now. Names, immortal names. And yet, if the Germans were to take them both, after a few weeks we should believe with the newspapers that these immortal names had in the hands of the Germans become mortal and were dead. What hypocrites we are!"

Charles Oakley nodded approval, but he was thinking of something else. He was very optimistic:

"Ah, my boy," he said, "you're always thinking about France. You forget Russia. There's Brusiloff advancing all along the line, taking scores of thousands of prisoners and ten towns a day for every muddy little village we might capture in Flanders. He's in Austria now, he has taken Czernowitz; his cavalry will be across the Carpathians in a day or two."

"Yes, I know," said Sir Hugh meditatively. He thrust

one finger after the other into the nodding bells of a foxglove. "Yes, great things may happen in the East."

"They will happen," said the old man. "When Tino has been got out of the way. Though, my boy, it may be more difficult to get Tino out of the way than the young gentlemen in Downing Street think. He's promised to demobilise and to hold a new election. Perhaps he will, and perhaps he won't. With a Greek you can never be sure that he'll do a thing until he's done it, and by that time he's done *you*."

"I suppose that like the others," said Sir Hugh, "you want to string up Tino. Poor Tino! do you know, uncle, I believe I'm the only Tino-ite in England. He doesn't want to land his people into a war; his Prime Minister did ask us in, but now he's got a new Prime Minister, and the new Prime Minister doesn't want the people to fight. Tino doesn't want to be massacred by the Germans, or massacred by us. He doesn't believe we're running the show properly, and yet he can't quarrel with us. If you remember that he's a soldier by trade and hates the Bulgar by heredity, he'll strike you as a public-spirited citizen."

"Politics!" snorted the old man. "Anyhow we can do without Tino. Come inside and see the map, and you'll see what that Salonica business can lead to."

They went into the library, and for a long time studied the confusion of rivers and ridges which make up Southern Serbia. The old man knew his subject; all his energies seemed to have been absorbed by this study. With a trembling red finger he pushed the Italians up Albania, enveloped Monastir with Serbs, and drove a triumphant Franco-British Army up the Vardar, stodgy infantry, slogging along, cavalry prancing, field artillery firing madly in all directions, and finally stuck a triumphant

flag into Nish, thus cutting the Constantinople railway. He was childish and charming; smiling a broad, toothless smile, he looked as if about to crow.

"Well," said Lady Oakley, "how did you find him to-day?"

"Oh," said Sir Hugh, "he's like the others. The only thing he thinks of is the war."

"There's nothing else to think of."

"No, I suppose not. Still, Lena, there have been wars before. Uncle Charles seems to remember wars more than anything else. To-day he again told me the story of my father's voyage from Azof to Scutari. What a hell a hospital ship must have been in '54! Funny, we're still very close to the Crimea, but it's queer to hear a man talking about it as something that once upon a time was news."

"Rather stale news, Hugh," said Lady Oakley.

"Not to him. Father was in the Crimea, Uncle Charles was in the Mutiny, and he did something at Plevna too, in '78. To him war is always the latest. He's war mad in a way."

"I shouldn't call him war mad," said Lady Oakley. "Of course war is bound to affect men. Women too," she added reflectively. "Look at the way girls run after the soldiers."

"Do they? I mean do they run after soldiers more than they usually run after men?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Lady Oakley; she was no sociologist. "Perhaps one just notices it more. Look at Westcott, for instance; she never cared for Sutton until he joined up."

"Poor Sutton!" said Sir Hugh, "such a nice, well-spoken young man. He didn't have a chance to do much. It seems hard that a man should be shot half an hour

after reaching the front; it's as if he hadn't had his whack. Is Westcott much upset?"

"Westcott!" said Lady Oakley, with a touch of sarcasm. "Of course she's upset. If you knew Westcott as well as I do you'd know she wouldn't miss a chance of being theatrical. But then that's Westcott all over. She's been with me four years, and she's had a tragedy every autumn, this being probably the result of imprudence in the spring. When Temple got married she used to cry down the back of my neck as she did my hair; now she's crying about Sutton, and at the same time she tells me she has had a letter from young Keele, and don't I think an engineer nearer a gentleman than a farmer."

Sir Hugh smiled. "Well, Lena, she's young. She may be a bit soldier-mad, as you say. Still she's not as badly off as poor Molly Hart. Cradoc's been given three months' detention, you know, for refusing to put on his uniform."

"He ought to be flogged!"

Sir Hugh frowned. "I wish you wouldn't talk like that, Lena. I don't defend conscientious objectors, but we don't flog people."

"If we did, we might keep down the sedition and disloyalty with which this country is honeycombed."

"I don't think so. We used to hang men for stealing five shillings, and they went on stealing. In Italy they stopped capital punishment, and the murder rate didn't go up. Punishment doesn't alter things; it only makes the executioner vile."

"Surely you don't mean that punishment should be done away with? If there was nothing to deter people, everybody would commit crimes."

Sir Hugh did not reply. He half agreed with her, but still felt uneasy; he had not arrived at lucidity. He was

not able to formulate his own feeling. He asked himself why he didn't want to commit crimes, and concluded that if the rich were not tempted to crime, it must be because they enjoyed the proceeds of the crimes of their ancestors. So he hurried into generalities.

"What I mean about brutal punishments, like flogging, is that it doesn't influence the man you flog. One could see that in the army in the old days, when men were flogged time after time. Punishment influences the men who *do* the flogging; it brutalizes them; they learn to inflict pain without compunction. The cat-o'-nine-tails does not make as deep scars on the back of the victim as on the soul of the one who uses it."

"Barry's called up," said Lady Oakley, "and Abbey will have to join up in July. I suppose old Mrs. Abbey can carry on the shop." She was not listening. And she disliked generalities.

XXIV

"Yes," said Irvine, "there's something in it." His finger traced the details of the machine. "Yes, I see. It might save labour. I'm afraid it wouldn't run cheap; there's an awful lot of maintenance in those automatics."

"Well, you know our trouble's labour. It isn't so much a question of costs. We can get those back in the price."

"Yes, I suppose we can. Though it's awkward. Three years ago, nobody could have done this work beyond ourselves, and Bickford-Smith, and two or three more. Now little explosive shops are springing up all over the country. They'll cut our prices for us. And they don't care about T. N. T. poisoning; one girl dead, another comes on.

"That's being stopped," said Cottenham, "you know quite well the bother we're having every other day with medical inspectors and Home Office people. Now, with a machine like this, with a pneumatic exhaust, you simply can't get any fumes; the down draught will keep the charging plate clear of dust. Don't you see, Irvine, this machine is the end of T. N. T. sickness. Before three months are out all the little shops will have to toe the line, so let's be first. Anyhow, I'm going to try it. We've ordered the machine, and I want to turn a shop over to it."

"We can't turn the whole of 'C' over. We'd want four machines to meet their output. I don't think it'd do to have some girls working on the old presses and some on this thing; we couldn't keep their earnings level, and that'd make discontent."

"It will have to be experimental," said Cottenham, "I want four average girls, and a first-class charge hand."

Irvine crossed the office to look at the plant of the factory. "Well, there's the little shop in 'D.' There are six girls there, pressing blocks; their charge hand, a Miss Nevin, is very smart."

"What sort of girl is the Nevin girl?" asked Cottenham negligently. "I mean what class of girl?"

"Oh, the ordinary class. Rather rough, but plenty of brains. The sort of girl who could run a teashop."

"Oh, that's not it at all," said Cottenham. "Experimental work wants quite another kind of intelligence, Irvine, imagination, all that sort of thing. Here, let me look. What's that little shop in 'E'?"

"Oh, you can't have that; they're casting containers. We're pressed for those; you can't have that one."

"Well, what about 'C'?" said Cottenham.

"'C?' Well, there's Miss Hayes. No, she's away ill."

Cottenham seemed thoughtful. "What's the name of the girl in 'C' whom we've just made a charge hand? Ockley, isn't it? Would she do?"

"Miss Oakley? Oh, yes," said Irvine; "not very experienced, you know."

"You're sure you can't spare the container girls?" said Cottenham.

"Absolutely impossible."

"Oh, well, we must make the best of it. You might send Miss Oakley to me in the morning, or after lunch. Any time will do."

Monica received the summons with a certain anxiety. An interview with the proprietor, Ivy Badger informed her, meant either promotion or the push, and as she had just been promoted it must mean the push. She felt innocent of misconduct, also excited. But soon her excitement lapsed, for Cottenham seemed strictly businesslike.

"I've asked you to come round," he said, after explaining in detail the working of the mechanism, "because I want you to know exactly what you're doing. This is a most important experiment. If it's a success we're likely to buy at least fifty of these machines, and they'll cost £5000. So we're relying on you to get true results."

Monica felt shy. "Of course I'm very glad you thought of me," she murmured, "but supposing I make a mess of it?"

"Oh, you won't make a mess of it. If you don't mind my saying so, it's because I know how cool you were during the fire that I want you to take this on. Now this is what we want."

He explained at length how the output of the machine was to be tested at frequent intervals; he would need a chart kept, showing time lost by breakdowns and by ad-

justments; and she must pay particular attention to the behaviour of the T. N. T. under hygrometric conditions which would be made variable.

"I want to be sure," he said, "that these machines act equally well in heat and cold, in dry weather and in wet. And also there is the question of poisoning. I shall want you to swab the charging plate yourself, and to see to it that the rag goes to the laboratory without being shaken, so that we may see whether fumes are sublimating on it."

"Well," said Monica, "it all sounds very difficult, but I'll do my best."

"I'm so glad," said Cottenham. Then, as Monica turned to go. "Miss Oakley, do you mind my asking if you have had any previous experience in this sort of work?"

"No, but it isn't very difficult, most of it."

"No, I don't say it is. But industrial work is much alike, whether it's on explosives or on making linoleum. Where were you working before you came here?"

"This is the first time I've done any work," said Monica, smiling. "Real work, I mean."

He smiled back at her. "Oh, I see, just dusting the drawing-room."

"No, not exactly that," said Monica. She was a little *distraite*. Cottenham had pleasant, regular teeth. "No, I'm afraid I can't claim even that, Mr. Cottenham. You see, I live in the country with my people, not very far from here."

"Oh?" said Cottenham. "Whereabouts? I motor about Kent a good deal. I expect I know your native village."

"It's just over the border, in Sussex, at a place called Knapenden. I don't suppose you know it."

"No, I'm afraid I've never heard of Knapenden."

"Oh, it's a lovely place," said Monica, as if to herself. "Our house is on top of the ridge, a few miles from the sea. There's just the marshes in between, grey marshes with flocks of sheep that look quite small, far away, as if somebody had upset a Noah's Ark. And it's so still in the afternoon. All you hear is the cawing of the crows as they rise. And sometimes the starlings fly out all together from a copse. Their wings make a sound like a sail filling with wind."

"It sounds lovely," said Cottenham truthfully, but he was less conscious of the mellow charm of the place she conjured up than of the soft glow in her grey eyes and the faint flush that rose in her pale cheeks. How adorable she looked, light as a goblin; no, she was too tall and slim for a goblin; a wood nymph rather. A wood nymph that would run on long, fleet legs through the thickets of birch, and sometimes between the trunks, one would see, passing swift as a gull, her white flank."

"How gracefully you put it!" said Cottenham. "You paint with words as others express with sound. You're like Locatelli's Pavane."

Monica looked at him seriously. She did not know what he meant, but the rhythm of the word Locatelli pleased her.

"I move in more prosaic surroundings," said Cottenham. "My house, three miles from here, is fair and square, thoroughly Georgian, thoroughly English, with clipped bushes of box. My romance is in the muddy foreshores of the Medway, which in the setting sun are as purple and rose as a mosaic in Byzantium. It's not unpleasant. It is reality. It's so very much England. But still, what does it matter? The place one's in does not matter so much as what one is. Happiness does not rise from the meadows like a will-o'-the-wisp: happiness

is rather a will-o'-the-wisp that flits in one's own heart. A heart is a small thing, but there's plenty of room in it for a will-o'-the-wisp to elude one."

Monica was moved. There was a hint of sadness in his voice, and something in her responded. Suddenly she felt self-conscious. This was her employer. It was all very well his being a good-looking man under forty who said pleasant things. But she had not come here to exchange poetic impressions. She grew clumsy.

"I must go," she said.

He smiled. "Yes, I'm afraid you must. You'll be losing time if you don't, or shall I tell the unit that you are to be paid time and a half for having had to talk to a middle-aged and decrepit employer?"

Monica threw him a sidelong smile, and flushing a little went out.

As soon as the door closed Cottenham pressed a bell. "Miss Kingston," he said to his secretary, "please give me the Kent and Sussex Directory." He turned to Knapenden. A very small place evidently. Oh, there was only one Oakley in Knapenden. Then he stared as he realised, as he put it, what he was in for.

XXV

JUNE was passing. Under the speckless, purple sky, humanity crawled in the steamy air that rose from the Medway and the docks. During the long day-shift the girls were listless and lazy; often they quarrelled. Ivy Badger was suspended for two days for fighting Muriel Penn. She took it well, remarking "that she didn't mind being suspended for 'er; it'd be worth while being 'ung to make her face ugly, except that she didn't think it could

get much worse." The output went down, and the unit foreman was pestered with unusual demands to be put on night-shift.

The weight of the heavy summer lay on Monica as on the others. It affected her work, the charge of the new machines and the responsibility to her employer now gave her less intellectual stimulus. It was exacting work, for the new machine, as is the way with new machines, worked very badly and continually demanded readjustment. It was a splendid packer, but it choked badly. And Cottenham's hygrometric variations were perfectly awful; the artificial draughts, too, demanding a continual watch over the dry and wet bulb temperatures, seemed to cause unnecessarily obscure disturbances in the T.N.T. powder. So, in the evening, Monica found herself tired, not so much in body as in mind, and this weariness took the form of an increasing homesickness. She found herself staring with a sort of hatred at the mud flats of Temple Marsh, at the dry, baked fields round Fort Pitt; she was brought near to tears as she remembered Sussex, green, rich and rolling. So now she had not the energy to visit the Saltaire girls and to become the confidant of their adventures. The Saltaires loved horses and horsemen. That was all right, but they loved too many horsemen, or rather in these days airmen, jollies, gunners, sappers, perhaps even snotties. One of them came down to an A. O. D. but said nothing about it.

"I can't sing arms and the man," thought Monica, nor could she sew or read. An intangible disturbance ran through her. She wanted silence and open spaces, places where she could think. Yet she did not think clearly in those open spaces; she could feel, in a lost way, but could find no reassurance against a sense of impending and inevitable peril. A not entirely disagreeable peril, yet a

peril. She was flying, as a nymph pursued, from a satyr that dwelt in her own heart.

In spite of the heat, as if moved by an instinct to exhaust her body so as to dull her mind, she now took long walks after dinner. They helped her, for the fresh night revived in her some energy, and when at last she came back, dusty, sweaty, when she had washed, she went to sleep at once; yet all the time she was conscious of a need which she called loneliness. She knew without recognising it that a precise need was forming in her which she had not known before. It made her afraid and unhappy, this aching space in her heart. Like a fresh-dug grave waiting for its corpse. It was absurd, she felt; she ought to have been glad. But Monica was resolutely a materialist, and so she realised that the future could reserve her no good. If this desire developed in her, she could hardly attain it, except at a price which, her traditions told her, she could not pay. And if she refused to pay this price she would always regret her niggardliness.

One night, when she had wandered far out of the town, up the Medway, she examined her conscience. The result lacked clarity. "After all," she thought, "what reason have you to worry? He has given you no special sign of interest. You yourself are not so interested as all that. You have known such interests before, and they faded. And time passed." She had faith in the day that rises like the tide, and like the falling tide bears away light objects from the shore. And of course this was a light object.

For three days after the discovery of Monica's parentage Cottenham lived in hesitations. Really, it was a bit too thick. He had in regard to women the crude intelligence of the man who has been familiar with many. He had known the realities of passion before he was fifteen,

and for twenty-four years had found in them his chief pleasures, not necessarily crude pleasures, but the means of stimulating his emotions, and of maintaining his romantic youth. Generally he had drifted into contact with women of the poorer classes; in this he resembled his fellows, but there was a difference: Cottenham preferred the girls of the people. Not only did his fastidious elegance find an excitement in the coarser grain, but he valued in the girls of the people an affectionateness not overlaid by gentility, a capacity for whole-hearted giving, buoyancy, beautiful shamelessness; his own finesse delighted in the primitive. But he also confessed to himself that he was not above certain satisfactions of vanity, that he enjoyed the easy royalty that his good clothes, his well-cut hair, his well-kept hands, his air of wealth and luxury, gave him among the girls who did not find this type of man among their own friends.

A faintly cynical materialism told him also that such affairs did not engage him too deeply, that these contests were gloved, that marriage was not thought of, scandal unlikely, silence purchasable; he knew that no artificial value was put on their surrender by girls who could depend on their own labour and need not maintain an unspotted reputation to sell in the marriage market, because they had something to sell in the industrial market.

His adventures among his own kind had not been very many, but had been enough to convince him that they were horribly complicated: there was such a lot of hiding. And women of a gentler culture seemed to think that they were doing something so dramatic and condescending in listening to him. It was irritating, rather, and when now and then it proved inevitable, which did happen because Cottenham only resisted his desires until it looked as if

his resistance would prove effective, he always told himself it was not worth while.

"The gently bred woman," he said once, "is either so light that she doesn't know what you mean when you tell her that you love her, or so excessive that she insists upon running away with you."

So his experience, his common sense, told him to think no more of Monica. He knew that he was not prepared for her sake to give up his children, which would happen if there were trouble. Nor was he prepared to give up Julia. Cottenham saw no reason why he should give up either Julia or Monica. Nor indeed why he should not retain his interest in both, if yet a third charm gained possession of his mind. "I ought to have been a Turk," he reflected. "But every man is at heart a Turk."

In some moods he told himself not to be so extreme. After all, Monica Oakley had shown no sign of interest in him. He thought her good-looking. Well! there were lots of good-looking girls, and he was none the worse for knowing it. He was on speaking terms with a number of pretty women, and that did him no harm. Supposing he did come to know her better? Well, it would be delightful, and he did not see that this would cause complications. Being assured that closer acquaintance with Monica could cause no trouble, he decided never to see her again. Having decided never to see her again, he bought a plan of Rochester, telling himself that a lonely girl must take walks, and that just for curiosity's sake he would like to know where she might be going.

There were not many directions that could tempt a wanderer from Castle Hill. Nobody would think of crossing the bridge into the little black slums of Stroud, nor, after a long day in a factory, would a girl with thoughtful grey eyes wander up the High Street towards

Chatham. Unless she went to the Cinema. But he felt that Monica would not often go to the Cinema. No, she might go up to Fort Pitt, where the ground was high and clear. But it seemed more likely that she should take the natural road along the Medway. Or, perhaps not, for that led past the factory: a worker would avoid the road followed every morning and evening. She would not go along the Medway, nor up the Borstal Road. That left only one avenue, the Maidstone Road that wanders through villas into the open air.

"It's a nice straight road, the Maidstone Road," he thought. "I'm rather tired of it, having to motor up and down daily. Still, on these hot nights, one's glad to get into the open, anywhere."

One cool, clear night, when a crisp crescent of moon hung low, Monica, slowly walking north along the Maidstone Road, saw a car come towards her. As it drew nearer it began to miss violently, to slow up; then it stopped, and a man, jumping out, raised the bonnet, began to prod the machinery. As she drew near, he turned to her and cried:

"Do you happen to have a match?"

"No," said Monica, coming closer.

"Hullo!" said Cottenham, for it was he, "Miss Oakley! What are you doing here?"

"I'm taking a walk," said Monica, and asked herself why she felt so embarrassed.

"Oh, it's beautifully cool, isn't it? I congratulate you on having decided to walk; I wish I'd done so too, for by the look of it this car has broken down for the night!"

"What a pity," said Monica sympathetically. "What are you going to do?"

"Well, I don't know. Something's gone, and I can't see what it is. The poor thing will have to sleep in the

ditch, I'm afraid. The trouble is," he went on meditatively, " that I want to run her into Maidstone to-morrow morning, and I can't take the train, as the first is too early and the second's too late. Look here, Miss Oakley, I wonder whether you could, on your way back, call at the first garage you see in Rochester, and ask them to send a mechanic. No, of course not; ridiculous, I couldn't trouble you."

" Oh, I'd be very glad."

" No, on second thoughts I don't see the fun of sitting here for an hour waiting for the man. It's very kind of you, but I think I'll walk into Rochester and bring him back."

In a moment, marvellously it seemed, the two were walking side by side on the high road.

Monica was stirred and a little afraid. She did not know what she felt afraid of, until, still silent, he filled and lit his pipe. Then she realised why she was afraid: he was wearing a brown suit, as in that day-dream of hers, and as in the dream he smoked a pipe as he went by her side. Actual life, repeating a half-formed desire, terrified her; she was afraid he would ask her some question, for she did not know if she would find enough self-possession to reply. Fortunately it did not prove necessary, for soon Cottenham began to talk.

" I wonder," he said, " whether you've ever motored at night. It's much more beautiful than in the daytime. When it's dark you are lost between a black earth and a secret sky. The features of the earth are fluid, for you won't know that you are upon a hill, at least until you reach its crest, which lies before you anonymous, and beyond which is the void. The void, don't you think, is necessarily romantic, for you don't know what may be there."

Monica nodded.

"Yes," he went on, "somehow every crest beyond which droops the land, every turn of the road beyond which it hides, contains romance. One is a seeker, and one may find — Oh, anything. A sedan chair drawn up by the side of the road, a gentleman in ruffles and a lady in a garment of flowered silk, with a Watteau pleat down her back, both of them dancing while a wandering fiddler plays, shall we say 'Lady Greensleeves.' Do you know 'Lady Greensleeves'?"

"No," said Monica; then with an effort: "What is it?"

"An old Elizabethan melody. I wish I could sing it to you. It runs something like this:

> "Greensleeves was all my joy,
> Greensleeves was my delight,
> Greensleeves was my heart of gold,
> And oh! for Lady Greensleeves."

They looked at each other for a moment and in their eyes were mute questions. Monica found herself more than ever afraid. She was passionately unawakened, but still she was twenty-six, and she could not misunderstand what lay behind the gracefulness of speech and the softness of the blue eyes that shone a little in the night. She was afraid of that softness and that grace; she wished that Cottenham were more like the men in the proof yard, who called after her gross things she did not understand. Or like the Australians who sometimes barred her way in the High Street, or like the warehouse clerks who followed her with leering invitations. She remembered one of them, and her sense of humour asserting itself, she began uncontrollably to laugh.

"What is it?" asked Cottenham. He looked vaguely offended. "What have I said?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Monica, "it wasn't anything you said. I liked what you were saying, but I was thinking of a man who spoke to me the other day in the High Street."

"Yes?"

"What he said was: 'Oh, I say, Miss, do come and 'ave a dry ginger.'"

Both laughed together, and in this laughter some of the fear evanesced. Still, both were conscious that by laughing together at a confidence in which lay a certain intimacy of confession, they had drawn closer together. As they entered Rochester, Monica could not shake off that new impression. Nor he; he knew pretty well what she was thinking. He had made it his business to know what women were thinking, and he was wise enough not to press his advantage. He knew that the pursuit of women is an art rather akin to jujitsu, that a slight push will cause them to fall in virtue of their own weight, while a harder push will often cause them to cling, and thus to save a fall.

XXVI

Monica thought: Rochester is an interesting old town, I ought to know more about it. So far, being at work from eight to six, and craving fresh air as a blackbird in a cage craves the free heaven, she had taken no pains to know better the Dickensian town. Now some protective instinct suggested Rochester as an alternative to unknown satisfactions. So, for two or three nights, when the moon was high and brilliant, she wandered about the little town that seems so large because it has embraced the straggling sordidities of Chatham. And though she was not the enraptured sightseer that she would have herself be,

she did find charm in the High Street, its pot-bellied shops, its wooden-faced houses with the overhanging roofs. The sumptuous clock-house of Sir Cloudesley Shovel, College Gate, and still more, perhaps, the old tile roof and the plain stone of St. Nicholas and St. Clement's, which stands modestly by the ugliest of cathedrals, bred in her a feeling almost of homesickness: it was so like Rye, but too alive.

Those long walks soothed her because they tired her; only they ended so easily in the shadow that the castle flung upon the moonlit pavement. She found herself looking through the railings of the Park, thinking with a vagueness that frightened her, as if she were not alone. Sometimes she reviewed her life, a life that would have been incredible two years before, a nine-hour shift, coarse meals at the factory canteen, eightpence halfpenny an hour, plus bonus — it seemed queer. To be inspected medically every week; to feel all right and be told by the doctor to drop T. N. T. and turn over to tape-glueing — to be a unit among other units uniformed in life — to have the welfare people opening your mouth and telling you your gums looked white. She felt like a fatted bullock in the pens at Rye being poked in the rump by a buyer. She laughed aloud as she thought of the searcher who passed her hands over her and sometimes discovered a forbidden hairpin, a searcher with fingers that saw, that would strip you of ring, of jewelry, of buckle, that would discover the point of an exposed pin, detect a safety-pin in the very depths of your apparel.

"I wonder why I do it," she thought. "I suppose that if I didn't do that I'd do something else." She remembered the pessimistic remark of old Peels trying to sum up life: "You see, Miss, if it isn't toads it's bugs."

But was it always bugs or toads? Monica was of a

kind that looks upon self-realisation as a form of indecent exposure, so would not acknowledge that her conception of life was not so elementary as the gardener's. She decided to think no more of those secret, attractive dreams. Then she deliberately conjured them up.

Without cause, she abandoned the Maidstone Road. Rather, she turned east, up Star Hill towards the Fort Pitt fields. There she stopped, in the moonlit wilderness. She felt entirely alone, for no sound arose about her, except the murmurs of lovers, and these heard nothing but their own murmurs.

"I suppose," she said aloud, "people would say I was immoral!" Then her inner self defended itself: "Nonsense! what have you done? Nothing. He put you in charge of his machines; was it your fault? He came to see how the experiments were getting on; of course he did. His car broke down on the Maidstone Road; could you help it?" Monica acquitted herself — with a strong recommendation for censure. "Don't be a hypocrite," she told herself suddenly. "It isn't what you've done; it's what you've thought. You wouldn't dare to tell Father Lublin, would you?" Then Monica was overwhelmed by a feeling of sweetest sin. She was glad to know that she would not dare to tell the old Monsignor how delightful had been this chapter of accidents. Evidently nature was no moralist, and if she, Monica, were a moralist, she would go back to Knapenden next day. "Look here," she said to herself again, "my dear girl, do try and realise he's married, to a woman who's much better-looking than you, and certainly better dressed. He adores his children. That settles marriage, quite apart from the fact that he hasn't suggested it. And anyhow — it's unthinkable. But then? Why don't you go home?"

And all Monica could answer was that she wouldn't go home. She did not know it, but she was representative of her class, in that she was not moral; she had codes, etiquettes, reservations; she had capacities for idiotic sacrifice, unreasonable prides and shameless indulgences. She did things because they were done, and not because they were enjoined upon her. Now she was facing something which was not done, but between which and herself stood only a traditional code without precise moral penalties. And so the girl, arisen in a world where religion was formal, society as negligent in detection as it was severe in chastisement, could find only in herself the means to resist her own desires.

XXVII

"I SHAN'T be back to dinner. I shall dine at the Works."

"Oh," said Julia, looking up from the *Tatler*. She looked lovely, dark and long, among the frothing laces of her bedwrap. "Must you, Frank?"

"Yes, of course I must. Do you think I enjoy the sort of dinner we get at the Works? Let alone not seeing you this evening, my Tea Rose." He bent down to kiss her.

She looked at him discontentedly. "It's all very well, Frank," she said, "but I do think you might give the Works a rest. Surely Mr. Irvine could help you more than he does. What do you want to stay at the Works for again? You stayed late last night."

He felt uneasy as the dark eyes fixed on him.

"Oh, well," he said lightly, "it's war time, and you're jolly lucky to have me at all."

She smiled. "Jolly lucky! Jolly lucky! I like your conceit. What about your luck?"

"I always know my luck," he said gently as he kissed her again.

"What are you going to do between six and dinner time?" she asked. "You can't start your beastly experiments until the night-shift comes on, and that's not till eight. Why can't you come home to dinner? It's only twenty minutes' run in the car."

"Oh, I can't stop to explain," he said impatiently. "There, I've got an awful lot to do and I can't stop. Good-bye." But as he went he heard Julia add: "But if you leave at six you can get here by half-past."

As Cottenham drove off and tried to absorb the contents of the *Times*, he heard a subconscious self murmur: "This is damned awkward. Suspicious; damned suspicious. She always was. That's what comes of being adored." He felt very aggrieved. "I do wish they wouldn't adore me. Women are a nuisance. Why can't they just love one and keep quiet until one's ready for them?"

Then he reflected that things were likely to get much more complicated. He acknowledged to himself that he wanted Monica to love him, and it struck him that if she did, and by degrees developed the characteristics of Julia, life would become altogether too intense. "Damn! damn! damn!" he muttered, "and there's no stopping it. Anybody would think it was *my* fault!"

All that day the sense of injury hung over him. He saw the future clearly: Julia would get irritated because she was neglected; she was not used to it, and he did not want her to get used to it; he had no intention of neglecting her. Only if Julia was going to work out the time he spent on his dinner he supposed he would have to bring

sworn statements from Miss Livingstone to show that he had dined where he said he had. And this war, too! Nothing but work, and no dodging it. Having to be at those beastly works all day long — or have the most awful messes, rows with the Unions, misunderstandings with the Ministry of Munitions, or floods, or — or something. No, intrigues in war time were no good. By the time evening came he saw clearly that he could not have proper access to Monica. He might squeeze in about three-quarters of an hour two or three times a week. Until Julia found out about those three-quarters of an hour.— No, really, it wouldn't do. But all the same Cottenham dined at the works, left the car in the garage and went to Castle Hill. He understood Monica well enough to realise that she would not go to the Maidstone Road, because she might think that he would hope to meet her on the Maidstone Road, and though, perhaps, she would have been glad to meet him, she certainly would not like him to think that she threw herself in his way. But if she was interested in him she would probably go somewhere else on the chance of meeting him there accidentally. Only where? He was so afraid of missing her that he dared to establish himself at the corner of the Park gate where the shadow fell thick. Twice he crossed the road as a woman's figure came out of a house opposite. In the dark street it was difficult to say from which door the figure came.

Then at last he saw her. She turned to the right, hesitated for a moment as if to cross the bridge, then turned and went up the High Street. She could not be going to the river side. Therefore she must be going up Star Hill. He followed her for a moment, carefully, then ran through the lanes on the right, outstripping her, and after a while, doubling back, reached the spot where the fields began.

His heart was beating. He was afraid. This seemed so deliberate. And yet, what else could he do?

As Monica drew near and suddenly saw him in the shrouded light of a gas lamp, he realised that he had acted wisely, for a hot flush rose in her cheeks and he saw that her eyes were full of fear. He knew this look of fear in women's eyes; they are so seldom afraid of anything but themselves.

They walked side by side for a few yards; then, without agreement, turned together into Fort Pitt fields. The earth was sun-baked, and rasped under their feet. Still, they said nothing, but walked quickly. Then Cottenham thought: "I must say something. I wonder what I ought to say." There was nothing to guide him in his experience, for holding that no two women are alike, he was of those lovers who never say the same thing to two women. But he did know that he must not apologise, express regret or tremor, because this would awake regret or tremor, and therefore resentment against himself who brought them about. So, suddenly, he said: "You are tall and slim like an ear of wheat in the moonlight."

A wise man talks of indifferent things, so that an unwise woman may greatly desire that he should talk of things not indifferent. "It's queer," he said, "somehow, that there should still be a moon. The world changes such a lot, and the moon doesn't. It's one of the things we don't improve upon. After all, there are various things we don't improve upon; we do invent telephones, but we don't invent new ways of making love. I suppose the old way's always new. But still, it's queer. Here's the world in chaos, having a terrific war about autocracy and democracy, and the freedom of the seas, and all that sort of thing that wasn't thought about when mankind was paleolithic — and when mankind was doing important things,

eating, drinking, making love. The only thing we've found out since then is art. Art, love, and breakfast, that's all mankind needs."

Monica looked at him with a sidelong smile. Art, love, and breakfast. How comprehensive! But she was not yet ready to answer him, and he knew it. So, as they walked up the hilly field, he enlarged on the incongruity of modern industrialism. He was not a puzzled man, but a man viewing incomprehensibles, the growth of capital, the almost equally swift rise of labour, the shock of their contact.

"I'm an employer," he said, "and I can't help being an employer, any more than I could help being a nigger if I was born a nigger. If I sell my business I'm a capitalist, an employer once removed. And it's no good my giving it away. I can't become a working man; the working men wouldn't have me. I'd be like a canary pecked by sparrows. Well, what does that mean? That means conflict, because, Cervantes put it very well, there are only two families in the world, the Haves and the Have Nots. I'm a paternal employer; I pay good wages, I build cottages, I form clubs, I even have teeth filled — and all I do is to strengthen the proletariat so that they may fight me."

Monica was interested. For a moment she forgot his pleasant masculinity. "I don't see that," she said. "You're a master, and there must always be masters and servants."

He shook his head. "Oh, no. That's the old dispensation. Other times are coming. Those below are developing more than strength, and that is ambition. It's no more a question of money, it's a question of pride. It's the natural rebellion against equality and — it expresses itself by a demand for equality. In the old days,

the men who couldn't bear to be equals became noblemen; to-day they become republicans. And every one of them intends to be his neighbour's president."

He talked for a little time, Monica listening and now and then nodding her head. She did not understand him quite, but already she liked him well enough to enjoy her incapacity to understand him. And he, delighting in the lucidity which arose in him through her mental surrender, was delighting in self-expression. He did not think of lovers' speeches. He wanted to make her understand his vision of a world like shifting sand, filled with rearing industries, vested interests like ancient oysters that have grown beards, obtrusive parvenus that side with the duke, and then stab him, withered institutions like Cambridge, proclaiming their rebirth and wrapping themselves up in a bed quilt, labour, labour determined to dominate, and disdaining the study of domination, impelled to coöperate, and falling asunder in the very act of union. "That's how we maintain ourselves, we masters," he said to her. "Because we are the solid that remains in the heaving crust. Individuals. And it can't last. The individual will have to be engulfed by the community before individuality is realised. As for us, the rich men, the cultured men, the dominant men, we are born, we marry, we die, most of us in perfect security, unaware of what is happening round us. And it's tragic to understand as I do that we are only the fugitive masters of a pregnant world."

They had reached the deserted hilltop. For a long time they stood there silent, and the woman in Monica cried out for some sign of personal interest, which she might resent, but must demand. As she stood, black against the moonlight, he seemed to remember. He tried to be light: "I say, I must have been boring you."

"No," said Monica, faintly offended.

"Do you know, those were not the sort of things I wanted to talk about."

"It's very late," said Monica, suddenly shrinking.

For a second he wondered whether it was better to hold her against her will, or to indulge her against her instinct. Then he decided to let her go, leaving everything unsaid. Its implications would be more powerful. At the bottom he stopped, and for a moment they looked into each other's eyes that shone. She looked radiant and unhappy. He thought: "Oh, why can't I let her alone!" and at the same time took her hand that trembled, turned it palm upwards and pressed a kiss into its hollow.

XXVIII

Monica had been allowed to go home on Friday night. On Saturday morning, at about eleven o'clock, Westcott called her to the telephone. The voice was far away and very faint — her fingers clenched over the receiver. Then she steadied her voice: "Yes, er — I can't hear."

Then at last Cottenham's voice grew clear: "I thought you'd like to know: the British offensive began at six o'clock this morning."

The offensive! A frightful excitement arose in Monica. She felt ashamed because filled with so much joy. At last this thing had come which had hung over them so long. It was like the delight of death, deferred by pain, of one whom one loves.

"It's on the Somme," said Cottenham.

"Oh," said Monica, "the Somme. Where's the Somme?"

"Rather difficult to explain over the telephone. You might say the middle is round about Albert."

Cottenham did not understand at first. He heard Monica cry out "Stephen!" and then, with a note of injury, almost of anger: "He said there was nothing doing there. Oh, I can't bear it!"

The faint voice said: "Oh, yes, you can, you can, my angel, my darling. We'll bear it together."

BOOK TWO

AMONG THE YAHOOS

Ah! mon colon!
Ah! c'que c'est long!
Ce sacré chemin,
On n'en voit pas la fin.
Le Général,
Y va-t-à cheval,
Et le troupier
Y va toujours à pied.

(French marching song.)

BOOK TWO

AMONG THE YAHOOS

I

A CERTAIN discontent had invaded Sir Hugh in these two months. Things were going well enough, but not as well as he had come to hope. Steadily, every five or six days, there was a push at some point on the Somme; little places like Fricourt, like Trones Wood, were suddenly crowned with importance by the newspapers, and a wobbly, black line showed progress on the large-scale maps. Unfortunately, Sir Hugh was one of those people who like the truth better than exultation; so he also looked at the small scale maps, and he could not deny that on those the wobbly line hardly went forward at all. Yes, he knew; Belloc, Colonel Maude, and their tribe were continually educating him in the difficulties of breaking through, persuading him that every yard now was worth ten yards once upon a time, and resolutely cheering him up when we did not advance by telling him it was all right if only we killed Germans. It annoyed him rather that the newspapers should also assume that in so doing we were killing no Englishmen; it also annoyed him to be told that when the Germans attacked and succeeded, they were wiped out, while when we attacked and succeeded, somehow or other hardly anybody was killed. This seemed to clash with the Roll of Honour.

It was not that he lacked faith in the ultimate issue,

for in that month of July, 1916, his attention was drawn to strange corners of Europe, to other wobbly lines on the Isonzo, in Poland, where the Russians were breaking through at Lutsk, pounding Austria, capturing hundreds of thousands of prisoners, while the Italians were magically scaling giant hills, and even entering Gorizia, a town. Only it all seemed so slow and so far. Russia, no doubt, was the steam-roller, but a steam-roller was not a swift method of locomotion.

Other irritants conspired to disturb him, the sinking of the *Nottingham* and the *Falmouth* by U-boats, which he vaguely felt was not sportsmanlike. And he was conscious of predominant cant, such as the hubbub that was raised when Captain Fryatt was shot for trying to ram U-33. The disturbance seemed to Sir Hugh as sentimental and unsustained by evidence as the clamour over the execution of Nurse Cavell. As he saw it Nurse Cavell and Captain Fryatt were civilians who had done their best for their country, in the one case by favouring the escape of Allied soldiers, in the other by trying to ram an enemy torpedo boat. They had been quite right; they had been heroic, but from the German point of view they were nuisances and dangers, and it was worth while to strike terror into possible imitators. At bottom Sir Hugh was not prepared to examine evidence; the doctrine of frightfulness seemed to him sensible; it did not matter very much whether one killed soldiers or civilians, or for what reason one did it: war consisted in killing as many enemies as possible, and in these days when everybody was doing some service to the nation, everybody, whether male or female, old or young, had a place in the firing line. The rules of war, when he freed himself, as he often did now, from the codes of an English gentleman, struck him as nonsense. One might as well have

had rules for murderers, or rules for burglars. The pretence that war was a tragic form of cricket struck him as puerile.

He tried to express this once at his club by putting forward that the ideal was to hang every German — man, woman, and child. This was greeted with loud approval, but the members recognised only difference between this proposal and the execution of Belgian civilians.

"I suppose," he thought, "that I expect too much. If people reasoned things out and thought logically there might be no war. Perhaps there is war only because they think so passionately. In war time two and two are five. We might breed no heroes if we bred no idiots."

Yet he passionately desired victory. He had a moment of the purest joy at the end of August when Roumania came in, when Charles Oakley at last used the little flags which he had been keeping for so many months, taking them out longingly every time Mr. Jonescu flung the hat of the nation at the feet of the Hohenzollern. He liked to picture the swarms of Roumanian cavalry streaming through the Transylvanian passes into the Hungarian Plain.

But it all seemed very long. It was all right, of course. In those days there were only two kinds of people, those who said it was slow but sure, and those who said it was sure but slow. He wondered whether it would be over by Christmas. About the end of July, for the first time, Knapenden faintly heard the guns.

II

All through the week-end Monica found herself the painful battlefield of two warring preoccupations. One

she thrust aside as best she could; she tried to think only of Stephen, to make mental pictures of her brother out there, in that place which the map did not evoke, lost in a region which words such as the Somme, Albert, Bapaume, did not make eloquent. She painted little pictures of him, dreadful little pictures of long, thin, boyish Stephen, flattened against the muddy side of a trench, crouching on the fire step, peering cautiously with large, strained eyes into a periscope — and the line of Sussex Coast men, men of Brede and Udimore, brown and slow, fishermen from Rye, shopboys from Hastings, white boys with sharp noses and frightened eyes — a crowded, shrinking line from which protruded a tragic motif, like the lances in Velasquez's "Surrender of Breda", black rifles, each one tipped with lightning by its bayonet.

It haunted her, this picture of stormy rest, and men, earth-men, earth-brown, so many inevitably doomed, ashes to ashes, earth to earth. . . .

And her imagination burgeoned into apocalyptic dreams, smoke, black smoke, fire stained as with blood, and craters yawning open and retching red clay. . . .

Then Cottenham's message materialised in her brain, that retracted like a freezing spider: she no longer saw the brown line cluster in safety. The British offensive had begun — she knotted her hands on her breast as she saw it begin, as she heard the whistles when "zero" came, when through the nightmare grimness of the dawn she saw the brown line leap out into that blood-clotted smoke, float in it like shades, then vanish like shades in a Stygian dream, save a few who became suddenly solid, as on the edge of the trench for a moment they swayed and then crumpled heavily. . . .

It was madness. She was not used to it yet. Death was not commonplace. It was not yet ordinary to stand

as she did for an hour on the hill to the east of Rye from which all the time she could hear, softly, the muffled guns, sounds that fell, gentle and regular, like the footfalls of a giant upon sand. . . .

All the time she was thinking of Cottenham, thinking of him with abominable self-contempt, thrust from her the vile idea that even now, when Stephen might die, she could still think of Cottenham, collect those few words of love and hold them close as a scapular, make of them a recipe for peace in a world that was all war. "A man loves me," she thought, "and it matters so much. Oh, I'm beastly!" She thought that she should ache like a large wound, because of all those who, that minute, were dying, whom she could see die, and yet gladness cried out in her. She feared to be alone. Through the Sunday she was not alone; she had Louise. But Louise irritated her: while the world dissolved in blood Louise went on knitting. When attacked, she said: "Well, Stephen wants socks. Somebody must knit them."

The tragic part of it was that Louise was right: if ever the world, on the eve of judgment day, comes to Armageddon, men will still want socks. So Louise went on knitting, sweet and serene. She finished her pair of socks and began a muffler.

From Lady Oakley Monica fled. Lady Oakley had become completely Valkyrian; she was riding the storm, but unfortunately she rode it in every room. Monica carried away to Rochester an unforgettable vision of her mother rushing into the study, where Sir Hugh was walking up and down, nursing a large and crumpled Kallikrates, and rubbing his face on the cat's soft shoulder. Lady Oakley was waving the *Observer:* "Hugh! Hugh! we've broken through. We've taken their first lines to a depth of three-quarters of a mile on a five-mile front!

Oh! isn't it splendid to be alive in these days! If only one could do something oneself. Why didn't they come and drop bombs on us, at least. Oh, for heaven's sake put that cat down! Let me see the map. Hugh, don't you hear, I want the map."

Yes, Lady Oakley was very tiring. Nor did her father help her much. Neither said a word about it, but they thought a great deal of Stephen. In the end Sir Hugh did refer to him inferentially:

"Hang it all! Everybody doesn't get killed!"

Monica knew what this irritable remark conveyed, put her arm round his neck, rested her cheek upon his shoulder, and so they stayed for a long time, her father staring into the air which he peopled with shades. But as she sat with the father whom she adored, a pleasant picture, the three of them, he, thin and fine, the girl red-crowned, and on his lap the great cat, his sumptuous belly of golden fur voluptuously upturned to caressing hands, she found herself invaded by another meditation: "What is going to happen now? What shall I do to-morrow when I meet him? Will he say face to face the things he said over the telephone? And then, what shall I say? I ought not to go back." She was horribly afraid to go back, and yet knew she must. His peril made it as necessary that she should go back, as the war had made it necessary for Stephen to go out there. The public version was that Stephen had gone out to defend his country's cause, and no doubt that had something to do with it, but Stephen would have refused to do that; what he could not refuse as an Oakley was to affront danger. Now she too was in danger, and it was necessary that she should face it.

The calmer air of the Cottenham Works restored her for a moment. In the train it had struck her that Cot-

tenham might be on the platform when she arrived. That was frightening. But she did not see him, and this vaguely annoyed her; she felt that she had been frightened on false pretences. All the morning she expected him to come in suddenly, as he often did, alert and bright-eyed, creating among the girls the pleasant agitation of healthy masculinity. Of course he would take her behind the shield to look at the chart. What would he do then? She shrank from the idea of words of love, probably caresses. But he did not come; it was a relief that he did not come, and a humiliation. She did not tell herself that Cottenham might know that she expected him, and wilfully disappoint her. The day was full of irritations. It began almost at once by a misunderstanding with Ivy Badger. Monica pointed out that as the machine was still a bad choker she should not overload it with T. N. T. powder, but fill the hopper progressively in moderate quantities. To this Ivy Badger replied: " Impossossible."

" Of course it's possible," said Monica. " Put in about half-a-pound at a time."

" Impossossible," said Ivy contentedly.

Monica made an effort to seem lofty; she remembered when she was the charge hand.

" Miss Badger," she said, " couldn't you say something else? "

" Impossossible," replied Ivy, and put the scoop in her pocket. Monica clenched her fists. She began to understand why Muriel Penn had, not long ago, hit Ivy Badger in the eye. She informed Ivy that she would be reported to unit and presumably suspended, then retired, nearly screaming with rage because Ivy calmly remarked that this also was " Impossossible." Late in the afternoon, when Monica had begun to hope that Cottenham would

come neither that day nor ever again, Miss Livingstone called her to the door with an air of mystery. Miss Livingstone was looking more saintly and emaciated than ever.

"Oh, Miss Oakley," she said, "I just wanted to see you for a moment. Of course it's a very difficult subject to talk about."

"Yes?"

"Well, I wanted to speak to you about Rose Harlosh." (Oh, this was very awkward.)

"What has she done?" Monica's nerves were so raw that she could not help being blunt.

"Oh — done. She hasn't done anything. But still one has to be careful in a factory where there are so many girls and so many men. That's the whole idea of welfare work."

"But what has Miss Harlosh *done?*" asked Monica rather sharply. Miss Livingstone revealed by degrees, all of them full of maidenly delicacy, that one of the military guard (such a nice man, grey-haired and a married man) had been noticed by her patrolling exclusively the strip of wire that ran along this shop. Miss Livingstone had thought it right to do likewise. In a factory where so many men and so many girls were employed — surely Miss Oakley would understand. Yes, Miss Harlosh's bench was near the window. Oh, of course, young girls smiled and giggled at nothing, but still, Miss Oakley would understand. . . .

It went on for a long time, and what enraged Monica so was that the Welfare Inspector made no charge against Rose Harlosh, nor against the military guard, but by the time she had done with them, it was quite clear that they had somehow done something to which nothing could give a name.

"I hate her, I hate her," thought Monica. Monica was not genteel. These accumulated irritants rested heavily upon her that evening as she sat by the lamp and cut out a blouse likely to be even more ill-fitting than her average. She realised simultaneously that one arm would turn out longer than the other, and that her probable entanglement with Cottenham was likely to make trouble for her. "What's going to happen?" she thought. Then: "What shall I do?" She found no answer to either question. Did she love him? No, of course not. But if she told herself: "I do not love him," she knew that would be untrue. She did not understand her condition, one of neither passion nor coldness, but a state where love can ignite at another flame, or fade if that flame is withdrawn. She realised that all this was full of risks, likely to lead to exposure, to difficulty, to vain hungers, to horrid satiations; to secrecies and shames, and if resisted, to incredible emptiness. But then, should she go home? or should she frankly draw him closer? She found that she could do neither. "I suppose I must drift," she thought, and in so saying did not realise that she was taking a woman's only course, for that course fills woman with the belief that the good things which happen to her are providential, while the evil things are merely unfortunate. Like most women, she was preparing to drift — up-stream.

III

Cradoc raised his eyes from the book which lay upon his knees and looked up to the little square of brilliant sky framed between the bars of his cell. It was a lovely little square of sky, and once, for a long time, a hawk had hovered in it, a black dot, rapt with its own move-

ment as it hung over the canals and dykes of Robertsbridge. It was strange, he thought, that he should not be unhappy in prison. He had now been three months in Robertsbridge gaol, having refused to put on his uniform when summoned, and sentenced to six months' detention; he had been transferred to the civil prison, he did not know why. Here he was removed from the turmoil of the life surrounding, that had seemed every day to grow shriller and more vulgar as hatred developed among men. He had a sustained sense of sacrifice; he was suffering for a principle, and he never told himself that in so doing he joyously gratified his vanity. "I am in prison," he thought, and even after three months this idea filled him with a sense of mystic and theatrical performance. He wondered what would happen next. In three months he would be handed over, he supposed, once more to be posted to some depot where the old noncoms would be rather rude, the old soldiers rather envious because he was getting out of the beastly job, and the young soldiers on the whole rather wishing they had the guts to do it too. Then he would appear before a decent crowd of officers, attempting to try him justly by means of an unjust law. And he would state his case again. And they would listen to him again as they had listened before, politely, and would try to find extenuating circumstances, and would fail, and would sentence him again. And he would come back again. And after another six months or a year it would all begin over again. It enraged him suddenly: once upon a time conscientious objectors were stoned; stone walls were a slower process. Then, realising there were still three months to come, he returned to his book, one of the best books in the world, he thought, the Bible. Cradoc had made an excellent impression on the chaplain by con-

tinually reading the Bible; following his usual policy, which was to avoid talking to the clergy, because it was not fair to expect them to understand anything, he had not told the chaplain that the Bible was a literary monument. That certainly would have offended the chaplain.

Footsteps sounded in the corridor, and a flicker of interest arose in Cradoc. In gaol footsteps are interesting, and there is variety in the smoke the wind carries beyond the bars, in the spider that spins its web. The footsteps stopped before his door, and as it clanked open to let in the doctor, Cradoc grew feverish with excitement. The doctor was a little man with a sharp, scrubby beard and a nose pinched in the middle, spreading to the tip. A bluff, sharp little man, who handled men's insides with the skill of an engineer handling the parts of a dynamo.

"Well," he said, "let's have a look at you." He went over the prisoner rapidly, without making him strip. "You're all right." Then, without need, he added: "We'll post you back to the work-room to-morrow; I suppose you won't be sorry."

"No," said Cradoc, "I'll be an expert shoemaker by the time I've served my term. I'll be fit to lecture on shoemaking before this war's done."

The doctor smiled. "Oh, so you expect to come back, do you?"

"Yes," said Cradoc rather wearily, for the picture of soft, fair-haired Molly Hart had passed through his mind. "I'll be coming back."

The doctor looked at him for a moment, as if hesitating. He felt that he had no further business with the prisoner. The man had been in the infirmary, was now fit to resume labour; that was the end of it. But he was interested in this quiet, self-engrossed prisoner. Also, the doctor being

Scotch, had been educated and found intellectual interest in the South rather scanty. So he stayed.

"Won't you ever get sick of it?" he asked. "Don't you think you'll be changing your mind before you're up for another court martial?"

"You mean join up?" said Cradoc.

"Yes. This isn't half a life for a young man."

"It can't be helped," said Cradoc. "It's not my fault if I think as I do."

"Oh, nonsense," said the doctor. "You aren't going to invoke determinism, are you?"

"I am not," said Cradoc, "for one thing I don't know what it means, but if you mean that I think I must act according to what I think right, and that I must give the example by suffering for what I think right, then I do invoke it. What I have done I must do again."

"And what will happen if the war goes on for five years?"

"I shall be imprisoned for five years. I shall not be the first who has. And many men must suffer as I do before this society, presided over by the aristocrat, exploited by the capitalist, and gulled by the priest, is blown sky high by a proletariat which will not always be imbecile."

"Do you know," said the doctor, "you socialists, and conscientious objectors, and all that, you're drunkards in a way. I come across a good many drunkards in my work, all sorts; not only men who can't keep off the drink, but people who go in for drugs, women who are dotty on clothes; monomaniacs of all sorts. Well, you people, you seem to me to get drunk on ideas; you get sodden with them at last."

Cradoc smiled. "Well," he said, "the bourgeoisie has not always been abstemious, but I realise, Doctor, that

this is a form of debauchery they don't go in for."

The little Scotchman twinkled. He loved a spar, and in the South he missed those long evenings with brother Scotch students when, after a great deal of whisky, the characteristics of women and the rival claims of the Wee Kirk and the Free Kirk were so violently discussed.

"Well, well," he said, "perhaps they don't, and it's quite as well. Maybe an idea is only a morbid secretion of the intellect."

"Such as patriotism," suggested Cradoc.

"Patriotism isn't an idea. It's an instinct."

"Oh, hate thy neighbor as thyself, and with equally good reason."

"You're too clever for me," said the doctor. "I look at these things simply. Here we are at war; you and I had little to do with the making of it, and we've everything to do with the bearing of it. We couldn't help it, but our country's gone to war. Isn't it the natural thing — the instinctive thing — to fight for it?"

"It may be the instinctive thing," said Cradoc, "but if so it's a bad instinct. The word 'country' means nothing. Once upon a time, in this island, Wessex was fighting Mercia, each one for their own country. Then one of them gobbled the other up and made England. Then England fought Scotland, each one patriotic for their own country. Then one gobbled the other up and made Britain. Then Britain, and India, and the Transvaal, and Egypt fought each other, each one patriotic for its own country; then England gobbled up the lot and made the British Empire. Would you like to carry it the other way, Doctor? If Sussex were really patriotic it would fight Kent. If Winchelsea were really patriotic it would fight Rye — until we got street fighting street, and house

fighting house. For, mind you, it always comes to fighting; without fighting there is no patriotism."

"Well," said the doctor, "and what does this historical lecture amount to?"

"It amounts to this, that the words 'my country' mean nothing, that when you have converted another country to adopt your — culture by the simple process of killing most of its inhabitants you have merely extended the area of patriotism. You shove your frontiers to and fro, but you don't alter the colour of a leaf on a tree. And if, then, the word 'country' is so elastic that to-day you include among our patriotic brothers the Boers, who, you can look it up in the papers, were in 1901 a race of coarse degenerates, you are asking me to fight for something false."

"But, good heavens! man!" cried the doctor impatiently, "don't talk to me as if I didn't know these things. Your country isn't just an area between frontiers; I know as well as you that frontiers shift about; when one says 'your country' one means a certain kind of culture, a certain kind of education, of impulse."

"Aren't those things superficial?"

"No, I don't think so."

"Then, how is it that we are so sympathetic to-day to the culture of the French who, at the time of Fashoda were, according to our newspapers, to be rolled in mud and blood? Why are we so hostile to the German culture which, via the royal family and its court, dominated English social life from 1815 to the seventies?"

The little doctor wriggled. "Oh, well, there are political necessities."

"And are there no human necessities?"

"You know," said the doctor, "you people look at things in such a queer way. You socialists are so damned

individualistic, so unsociable. You seem to have no feeling of community. There's more real socialism in a platoon of the Sussex Coast all dying together."

"They find it easier than living together, don't they? I suppose that the instinct of man is to slay. But what are we for, I ask you, doctor, except to repress instincts? What is civilisation for except to keep down instincts? To get rid of that filthy old muddler whom they call Nature! The thing that can't make a swamp without malaria, the author of the bug and the caterpillar, the creature that protects the pregnant mother against disease, and lets her sicken and die when her child is growing up. Yes, it's natural to thieve, and to rape, and to kill, and it's natural to lie and to flatter — but it's our job to keep Nature down. So, instead of indulging Nature, the beastly thing that likes to use our blood to manure soil where she can grow weeds, it's our job to knock Nature out. Nature doesn't know how to get a child born without pain, and she's had to invent a thousand cruel diseases to muddle us out of the world after muddling us in. So don't tell me that because Nature has implanted in us an abominable vanity, told us to believe that it's better to be an Englishman than a German, an Englishman than a Scotchman, a Sussex man than a man of Kent, don't tell me we've got to abet her, and keep it up by killing as many of the other lot as we can, until they're ready to take their revenge on us."

"Well, well," said the doctor amiably, "these are hard words. Let me tell you as a medical man that Nature is not such an old fool as all that. Christians will tell you that the troubles of the world are crosses which must be borne. I tell you that they are a way of sorting out the strong and breeding a finer race. Disease knocks out the weak."

"They breed before they're knocked out."

"Yes, but many die at birth."

"I'm afraid they don't. Lunatics, consumptives, the feeble-minded, all those people are increasing."

"Oh, no. Not as fast as the population. You see, science has improved conditions."

"Ah," said Cradoc, "then we're not leaving it to Nature!"

"One can't leave everything to Nature. But that's a side issue. What I was suggesting is that civilisations that grow side by side are bound to be rivals. If one expands the other's got to make room. It's like two plants in one pot; one of them's got to kill the other."

"Why not take them out of the pot?" said Cradoc.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, if two plants can't live in a pot, don't put them in a pot. If two nations can't live inside their frontiers, don't put them inside frontiers."

"The United States of the World! Utopia!"

"Everything that exists has been a Utopia. Germany to-day is a united country; before Napoleon came it comprised three hundred and eighteen States. Well, the three hundred and eighteen States were taken out of their pots, and there you are."

"Yes, and they were taken out by force. Force is the only rule. You can take it that war is a biological necessity."

"I think it was a German said that."

"Well, even a German can speak the truth."

"You'd better not say that in public," said the prisoner, smiling. The doctor looked irritated. He ought not to have committed himself with this man, interesting though he was. Still he was anxious to make his point. "Look here," he said, "you've got to recognize that only

the fighting races have been fine races, learned, noble races. The Chinese aren't fighters, and there they lie, stupefied in tradition and opium; the Italians rotted for four centuries, and it needed the war against Austria to make them a nation."

"True enough," said Cradoc, "and I won't ask you to show that the modernised Chinaman has produced Ming pottery or a new Confucius; and I won't press the point that this entirely rotten, pacific Italy produced more great pictures than all the rest of the world; I'll just ask you to say whether you think that ideal fighting race, the Russian Tartar, has proved an example of nobility, cleanliness and justice; and perhaps you'll tell me what you think of the Turk, who has fought everything he ever saw for the last thousand years, without ever producing a picture, a book, a judge you could not buy, and who has domesticated through the east only one animal: the louse."

"You're incorrigible," said the Doctor. "By the way, I suppose I ought not to tell you, but the British offensive has started on the Somme."

Cradoc was silent for a moment. "Oh. Then let's hope we shall be beaten. Only if we are beaten shall we turn against the tyrants."

IV

It happened as Monica had expected. As she stood behind the shield, posting upon the chart the output of the last hour, she grew conscious of a presence behind her and turned with an unreasonable start, as if she had not known that in the danger buildings every one must come soft-footed. For a moment they looked at each

other in silence, and Monica was filled with a glad shyness, for his good looks, the brilliance of his blue eyes and the close-cropped, curly brown hair exhaled masculinity and taste for good living. He was so real, after having been incredible during the week-end. Meanwhile, he looked at her, and thought: "I haven't seen you for four days, and I've managed to miss you." It struck him as fatal that he should miss her. She ought not to have mattered to him. Was she not, after all, meant to be a toy he would break to see what there was inside? Instead of that she was assuming importance, and he hated to think that anything should be important, except himself.

"Good morning, Miss Oakley," he said, and felt shy. "How are things?"

"Oh, pretty well. Picric is giving rather more trouble than T. N. T."

"Oh, of course. The crystals are coarser."

They talked for a little time in jerks, conscious that this incoherent conversation about densities and piston-courses was accompanied by a secret song. He thought: "I adore you," and said, "It's clear 65 degrees makes the best bag."

He went into the outer shop for a moment to see the machine at work and to disarm suspicion. Then he came back, and Monica found herself tense as if an instinct told her that decisive action was now inevitable.

At first he had had real questions to ask her; now he could ask her only a question that she could not answer. But he surprised her, as he always did, so much swifter is the male than the quiescent woman. She shrank away as with a hurried movement he seized her by the wrist and closed her hand upon a small parcel. She realised that she had been given a letter and something else. In the

whirl of her emotions she could not understand why he should assume a hard voice:

"So far, so good, Miss Oakley. This chart should now be kept on the basis of temperature variation only. Please see to it."

He went out, followed by the eyes of the girls as he passed the shield.

"Oh, ain't 'e 'orty," said Ivy Badger.

"I think he's lovely," said Miss Penn.

Monica felt hurt, though she now understood that he was keeping up the part of the cold employer. Perhaps at heart he was a cold employer. Then she discovered with surprise that she rather liked that idea: those harsh tones, that implication of male dominance, pleased while it outraged her. But she was not in the mood for psychology, and when at last, during the dinner hour, she was able to get away, she tore open the envelope with hands that excitement made dry. In the envelope was a large key, and with it a note:

"Most exquisite, most adorable, copper-crowned lily, eyes soft as water and hard as steel, mouth that Cupid might steal with which to make a bow, most exquisite, most adorable . . .

"This is the key of a place they call Bull's Field. It lies along the Medway, eight hundred yards from here as you walk away from Rochester. This key will let you in at the door in the palisade, wisely set by the Providence of Lovers in the lane off the main road. At seven to-night you will turn this key. It will let you into Bull's Field as they call it, into the Garden of Eden if you like . . .

"Most exquisite, most adorable, I place in each of your palms a kiss so heavy that you shall carry the stigmata of Eros."

She looked at the key for a long time. So it had come.

She was frightened and unhappy because she knew that resist him as she might she must resist herself less faithfully.

Later, as the wooden door slammed behind her, her heart would not be still, though Bull's Field was reassuringly empty. It was a large building plot where one day the Cottenham Works might extend. Now, behind its fences it lay a patch of rank grass where the nettles had grown tall. A few field flowers, shy blue speedwell and stitchwort, spattered the grass with little blue or white eyes, grew where they would; here and there brown and yellow kidney vetch asserted itself. She was all alone, and she thought: "I have come. I could go away, it's still time." But she knew that it was too late. For a moment she played with a vision of herself, the Monica she ought to be, with her hair close plaited, hard collars and cuffs, an interest in historical monuments and Sunday schools. But she realised that she was not that sort of Monica, and told herself, with a dry, humorous smile: "I suppose one's the best sort of Monica one can be." Then she started, for she had not noticed against the opposite fence a small shanty on wheels, on the wall of which was painted: FOREMAN'S OFFICE. She did not have time to wonder why it was there, for there was somebody inside. The window opened, and Cottenham looked out at her. He did not smile, nor sign to her to come, but so remained, fixed and silent, rather sad, as if he too shared her fears and hesitations and was being the best Cottenham he could. Monica faintly shrugged her shoulders and slowly walked towards the shanty. When the door closed behind her she set her back against it as if she had come so far and only now acquired the strength to turn back. She was very frightened. She thought he would seize her and

crush her with caresses that would delight and terrify her. She half hoped that he would. If only he would terrify her, disgust her, she could save herself yet. How she would hate it if he did, and how she would bless him! But Cottenham took two steps forward, his eyes large as if he doubted his own delight, reluctant steps, as if he were assured of defeat within his own victory. Then he took both her hands, that stiffened and withdrew while yet they clasped his own, and silently he knelt at her feet, pressed his forehead against the hands that almost at once, reassured and pitying, gently stroked upwards the short rebelliousness of the brown hair.

It seemed so natural and easy, the course of that hour. He kissed her hands, but he had done so before: it seemed too simple. Then, holding her by the arms, gently as a man may hold a butterfly which he fears to crush, she was quite close to him yet still felt free. Then his arms were round her, not urgent, it seemed, not arms conquering and cruel, but arms supporting, in that moment of her weakness. So tender, so gentle was it that she felt he feared his own desire. It was not the man sought his victory, but the woman taking pity on his incredulous delight. It was she, consoling rather than abandoned, laid her cheek upon his. And when at last he held her close and sought lips which she averted yet did not refuse, there was in the caress a character of the inevitable. For long minutes, silently, they sat upon the bench that was, with the rough wooden table, the only furniture of the shanty. Monica had no thoughts. She was conscious only of emotions, not only the pleasure of his contact, but the joy of feeling that she had now gone too far to draw back: she was liberated from decision.

She grew conscious of an unrest in him. He kissed her more urgently. A certain roughness came into his em-

brace. She did not understand then what she understood later, that his fervour was passing, that he was beginning to think of time. Exquisite as was Monica in his arms he could not feel free! The high attractiveness of the scene frightened him. How long had it been going on for — ten minutes or half an hour? How was he to tell? And he cursed the minute for being so sweet that he could not measure its flight. He thought of Julia. And still Monica did not move, but lay in his arms, languid with content. It was horrible. Would the girl so remain. Might it be his fate to stay thus for endless lives holding in his arms a girl who owed him her ecstasy?

"Oh," he thought, "I wish I'd let her alone." Then he saw the shadow the lashes made upon her flushed cheek and felt glad of his own folly.

As last, as if by agreement, they shook free. He said: "I must go."

Monica looked up at him: "Yes, of course you must go. Good night," she murmured softly. He held her to him in an embrace in which was delight, impatience, hatred, gratitude, and was gone. She followed him soon after, felt so light and removed from the thick world that she wondered if, like Ophelia's ghost, she could have trodden the cream and cold corollas of the dog-daisies without causing them to stoop.

V

"Well, you might have telephoned," said Julia.

"I couldn't get through; they said you were engaged."

"We haven't had a call all the afternoon."

"Well, the exchange always says engaged when they're slack."

"You know perfectly well how angry cook is if the

dinner's spoilt. And it's not easy to get a cook. Besides, why are you so late? You're always late nowadays."

Cottenham felt very angry. Julia was that night indeed ebony and amber. Her frock of yellow brocade, with the long close sleeves, and the necklet of green jade made her immensely tall and disdainful. So, as he was very angry, he courted her with a little gleam of passion and desire in his blue eyes. "It's all very well," she grumbled, as he kissed her behind the ear, a caress he knew she never long resisted. "It's all very well," she repeated in a muffled voice. It was like a purr.

And as he kissed her he thought: "Twenty minutes here and there. My duty to this woman and, damn it, my desire too. And this damned war, plotting out your day from morning to evening, tying you by the leg, making all movement impossible; if you aren't a slave in an explosives works, you're a slave in the army because you've committed the crime of not being over forty-one. And, you idiot, you're trying to do all that, to make love to a wife whom you adore, and to a girl whom you're going to adore, with every chance of meeting a third girl whom you will also adore. Oh, why was I born?"

VI

A CHARACTER of intimacy formed about Bull's Field. Once upon a time it had been a building plot, and now the dead cats, old hats, broken bottles and pots were covered with merciful nettles, bramble, flowering blackberry; every seed the weary wind let fall had come to rest and now to blooming. Along one side of the high palings grew thick dog-daisies; patches of lucerne and clover were fragrant with the promise of hay. The exquisiteness of

Bull's Field depended upon the palings, erected before the war, therefore high, over eight feet, and well joined, so that once the door closed it became an oasis. As yet it had no trees, though here and there tiny oaks were beginning to sprout. As it could not be overlooked, often the hurried lovers, between the closing of the factory and the imminent claims of the man's home, could walk in Eden, arms entwined about waists, and cheeks upon shoulders laid.

Almost every night now they came to Bull's Field. Monica loved it.

"It's queer," she said once. "I who come from the real country, where in spring primroses and bluebells grow so thick that walking seems a sin, it's queer that I should find in all these ragged little flowers something that I can't find in Udimore Copse."

"You find me," said Cottenham.

She smiled. "How conceited you are, Frank."

"Yes. And you like me conceited. Is it wonderful? Isn't it enough to make a man conceited to think you care for him?"

"Flatterer, as well as conceited."

"Agreed. A wealth of vices. And it takes many vices to make one virtue palatable. There's something very insipid about virtue. There used to be something very insipid about you. The first time I held your hand it was — well, a capital imitation of ice cream."

"And may I ask what I am like now?" said Monica.

"Oh, custard."

"The grace of your metaphors, Frank, entirely carries me away."

He took her face between his hands and suddenly looked serious. "You like my beastly metaphors; you like me coarse, and you like me cruel; you like anything

that makes you feel I have stripped off my body and stand before you clad in nothing but my soul." He crushed her face a little, twisting her ears to hurt her. "You like me beastly because you know that all men are beastly inside, and because it's such a damned big compliment to show you without artifice just how beastly I am."

She closed her eyes and murmured: "Don't, Frank!"

"Don't what?"

"Don't make me see myself as I am."

His laugh had a cruel ring as he bent to kiss her. "Before I've done with you," he said, "you shall see me as I am, and yet you shall love me; and you shall see yourself as you are, and you won't know whether you wished you still were blind or whether you should pray for tenfold sight." Again he kissed her, drawing her to him and crushing her, as if destroying in her some barrier. "Before I've done with you, in Eden, you will have eaten the fruit that tells you what is right and what is wrong, and I'm damned if you'll know one from the other."

She struggled a little. "Don't, Frank."

But as he did not release her she used the feminine weapon. "You're hurting me," she murmured. And he said: "I like hurting you." Then she realised that this man knew how to turn the woman's weapon against her; she feared him and rejoiced in her fear.

She was not always surrendered. Sometimes Cottenham did not seek to make her feel his mastery. He would bring her the thought which had preoccupied him during the day. Often he talked about the war. Just then the gallant Roumanian Horse was scuttling back to Roumania, the Germans at its heels, and Mackensen was pressing in over every frontier.

"It's perfectly lovely," said Cottenham, "to watch

Mackensen work. It's so perfectly done. First he shoves in the passes, gets troops to concentrate against him there, then crosses the Danube in their rear, catches half, disperses the rest towards the south, where they meet another body that's crossed the Danube; right, left, then left again to finish; it's measured like a sonata."

"It's all very well," said Monica, "but it's our ally."

"Don't be such a materialist. Can't you feel delight in seeing a man do a job perfectly?"

"We've got to win the war," said Monica.

"Oh, leave that to the *Daily Mail*. Let's look at the artistic side of it."

They often used to quarrel about the war because Cottenham was so impersonal about it. At bottom the war did not interest him much.

"The war, after all," he said, "awakes such exaggerated interest. When in England they talk about the war one might think there never had been a war before."

"Not a war of this size," said Monica.

"Much larger wars. Germany has been rolled over by the tide of war from end to end, and for thirty years on end, and rolled over by Napoleon as he went to Russia, and rolled over as he came back. And the Arab got halfway across France. And the Turk got to Vienna. And Charles the Twelfth, the Swede, got to Prague. We haven't been touched by the war, and we won't be. Modern armies are too big to move. They sit in the mud and heave, and by the look of it they'll heave till doomsday."

"Do you mean to say we shan't win the war?" asked Monica, this being to her a new idea.

"Nobody can win the war. The losers, as we call them, are crushed and ground by defeat; the winners are inflated by their successful militarism into submission to an autocracy more cruel than the one they overthrew.

There's no winning wars. If we're beaten we'll lose our self-respect, and we'll bleed in taxes. If we win, we shall live in fear of Germany's revenge, so we shall saddle ourselves with an army and a navy fit to meet that revenge; living in fear of militarism we shall institute militarism; feeling the need for unity, and having won by force, we shall put our faith in force. If we win we shall liberalise Germany until she becomes a sham England, and we shall militarise England until she becomes a sham Germany. If we knock down the Kaiser and Hindenburg, it will only be to set up Mr. Hughes and Mr. Bottomley. War's a game of musical chairs with Death at the piano."

She did not answer. She hardly understood him, but his vehemence upset her. It was a rare vehemence, for Cottenham did not feel things strongly. He was capable only of rage. As a rule he turned to irony:

"It's the things round the war that matter," he said; "war's only a symptom; it means that the capitalist holds unsold stocks, and that the democracy has grown bored with chocolates and cinemas, just as it got sick of bread and circuses. What's the struggle between capital and labour but a desire for change? At bottom the capitalist is sick of making money, just as the operative is sick of making tin tacks. So they make war, war among themselves, war against each other; it makes variety in the newspapers. After all, there's never been a serial to beat this war."

"I wish you wouldn't talk like that," said Monica. "One might think you didn't feel anything."

"Perhaps I don't. I've started thinking. One can't do both. And there aren't many people thinking. It isn't thinking sets up the shop stewards against the trade union leaders; it's impatience, it's obstinacy, it's raw hatred. Feelings, that's what it is. When two men start

thinking they burgle a neighbour's house. When they start feeling they fight each other for the swag."

"What do you think's going to happen?" asked Monica.

"Change, the thing that one side calls progress and the other decadence. All sorts of things. Parliaments are going, kings are going. In England kings and parliaments won't exactly go; they'll sort of get overlooked. Parliament will continue to meet and will pass Acts, and Acts, and nobody will care. The only Acts that matter will be those about which Parliament telephones the Chairman of the Trade Union Congress in England or Gompers in America and asks if that will be all right. It'll go on for hundreds of years. In a couple of centuries some sort of Asquith will make speeches about the historical mother of parliaments, or the mother of historical parliaments, it doesn't matter, and be saluted by the sentries because he wears a cocked hat. It will matter as much as the Master of the Buckhounds, and the Board of Green Cloth. You see, that's the way we do it in England; we never bury the dead past, we wrap it up in the present."

"But," said Monica, "that sort of thing's what they call revolutionary, isn't it?"

"Well, we need revolution. Nothing but a revolution in the government will prevent a revolution among the people."

Suddenly his mood changed. He ran his fingers through her hair, bending back her head. "What rot I talk," he murmured hoarsely. She tried to shake her head. No, it wasn't rot. It was not coherent, but it stimulated her, and she did not know whether her body responded more to the rough sweetness of his touch or the waywardness of his speech. For a time she was con-

scious of a resentful emptiness because at half-past seven, indeed, not later than twenty to eight, he had to leave her. Half hours in Eden, he said once laughingly, but there was a bitterness in the laughter, and at the door he ran back to seize her once more in his arms and to bend her to caresses that grew more audacious. As she lay in the patch of clover she was minded to weep. She felt so much more lonely now that he had filled some portion of her life and made vacuum in the rest. Slowly she moved across the patch to the broken grass where his body had lain, and there buried her eyes upon her arm and wept because under her lips she felt only the cold fragrance of the flowers.

One night, towards the end of August, they attempted a more audacious escapade.

"It isn't enough," said Cottenham, "these half hours."

"No," she whispered.

Both were bearing the penalty of their sensations: every time they needed a little more.

"*Si tu veux faisons un rêve, montons sur mon palefroi,*" murmured Cottenham. "Alas, I have no palfrey to carry you, but this is what we'll do."

And the next night, according to this plan, at about half-past eleven, Cottenham, with an exquisite sense of breaking bounds, escaped from his silent house and met her on the Maidstone Road. It was a hot night, and soft rain was falling. In the mist they met, said Cottenham, like the damned shades over the chaldrons. They did not speak much then. At last they felt free because they were lost in the night: none could see them, so nothing was. They went, careless of direction, in the rain that fell as a merciful shroud, stopping only now and then, in a sudden access of emotion, to clasp and for a moment to hold. It was only later that Cottenham grew

light: "You know," he said, "we've no luck. It's raining. It never struck us it might rain when we were together. Hard lines, too. Two people ought never to go out together if there's no chance to sit down."

She smiled, and he ran wet fingers down her coat collar. She shivered and found herself giggling, but he did not remove his hand, and in a moment she marvelled at herself, for pleasure lingered in the incongruous caress. Indeed she found herself leaning against him with greater abandonment. She could hardly understand what spell was falling upon her. Three months before, how incredible it would have seemed that without much argument as to seemliness or morals she should do such things. She had slid, and slid. She told Cottenham this. He laughed. "Love," he said, "is a butter-slide and at the end you fall into life."

She did not laugh. She was afraid of life as of love. Such things were not within the Knapenden programme. Or at any rate life had always seemed impossible until it was licensed by the vicar. All this was exquisitely fraudulent. Monica occasionally thought herself criminal, and as remorse did not arise, concluded that the roses and raptures of vice claimed more colour than the lilies and languors of virtue.

She tried to explain once. "Of course," said Cottenham. "You're waking up. You've been asleep. Sleeping beauty! And I assure you that in the old fairy tale Prince Charming was not even introduced. What's converting you, my Monica, who are moral by habit if not by practice, is that you know you're doing your duty."

"My duty!" said Monica, rather sharply. She did not like to be told that she was moral by habit but not by practice. She was woman enough to want to be told that she was moral by habit and immoral by exception.

"Yes, your duty. It's the duty of every girl to become a woman." He was surprised at her response, for she seized him by the arm and buried her face upon his breast. Only after a moment did he understand her, did he feel how terrified she stood before her desire to attain womanhood. That night, their perceptions were sharp, and they spoke more freely. Held in each other's arms, leaning against a gate, he said a queer, eruptive thing that shook her.

"Julia'd never divorce me, and I'd lose Rupert."

She held him close. Mixed in her pity, as she understood what had passed through his mind, this sudden desire to come to her, to her only, there ran her first thrill of hatred for Julia. And he had never before pronounced his wife's name. He had too much tact.

"No, no," she murmured, and for the first time dragged his head down to her lips, as if to assure him that she made no bargain. It thrilled and horrified him, this surrender, for it made him responsible. She was going to love him, then. And love was so tragic. What a mania women had for love! Why couldn't they be content with gestures? And so she did not understand why, so sharply, he drew back from her. But he paid the penalty of understanding her too well: seeing her shaken and surprised, he embraced her with a sort of despair. If she had known him as he knew women, she would then have realised that he could not love her. But she thought that he had seized her again because he loved her uncontrollably. And as he realised this his agony of responsibility grew. "What shall I do?" he thought, as slowly they went in the soft night; "if I let her alone she loves my coldness, if I pursue her she loves my ardour. No, there's no stopping on the butter-slide. Poetic metaphor!"

He escaped better than she the penalties of their attraction. He had the masculine privilege of interests and occupations which combat emotion by absorbing intellect. At the works his day was a continual agitation, points of accountancy to settle, tactful conferences with Woolwich inspectors; or some decision must be taken as to the scrapping of defective material, the venturesome purchase of new plant; or some difference of opinion arose with the Ministry of Munitions, when he had received four different orders from three different departments, all of them different, two contradictory, and those two from the same department; or Royalty appeared, and selected shops were violated with soap; or people in strange clothes, deputed by one of our Allies and accompanied by an interpreter who could make himself understood neither in English nor in Vlacho-Bosniac, came to see a special process, and also to ogle the girls. It helped him, all this, and yet it enraged him, this absorption of a fleeting life by sterile occupations. "After all," he thought, "there's only one sport in the world that's worth while."

Monica did not put it like that. While Cottenham thought that passion was the only sport in the world, Monica never thought of any other sport. Born to love she could turn to nothing else. Often she told herself, with a sort of terror, that she was forgetting her old pleasures. It was as if she had cared for nothing until she cared for him. She felt that her life was evolving, and she shrank away from the thought that it must evolve entirely. It was as if she were compelled to offer herself up to her own instincts. Once only, as she sat alone one night at Castle Hill, did she put it clearly to herself: "Men are being killed all round. Lots of girls won't get men. Can one do without a man? I used to think

so. I suppose one can. Lots of girls do. There's work of course. Yes. Miss Livingstone's lost her complexion. One gets so skinny. I wonder whether work agrees with women."

Monica did not yet understand herself. She was not clear that the duty of a girl is to become a woman. She was merely unable to discern other duties.

VII

THERE were times in Sir Hugh's life, as in that of most men who are rather young or rather old, when he reviewed his life and compared it with the present. He felt rather old that morning as he turned back after passing Policeman's House. September was nearly done; pale mist lay imprisoned between the hedges that broke into little fields the reclaimed marsh. Ahead he could see the elms whose leaves were growing scanty and fluttered dryly in the cold wind. The ploughed fields, running away towards Stoat's Farm, looked blackish and damp, as if they could grow only tares. As he walked slowly on he thought of the old days, of jolly rags at Eton, of old Mother Emily Mary, and how he overdid it on jam puffs the day they licked Harrow. He sighed. He had not been happy at Eton; as a boy he had been meditative, and the masters discerned in this an ironic spirit which they thought bad for the school. So he was swished, his youth being a period which did not spare the child. But he did not know that; forty years of distance gave his school days forty years of charm. And later, Oxford, being your own master, reckless "brekkers", green "art" jars (daring innovations of a dying century), — and then life. Money in one's purse and desires on which to spend it. Scraps of memories rose

in him; a boisterous party the night the Grand Hotel opened, and later an extraordinary afternoon at the house of some woman whose name he had forgotten, an afternoon overshadowed by a rather pasty, ungainly man with a beautiful coarsened face and eyes sweet and melancholy, called Oscar Wilde, who made epigrams the like of which were no longer made. And Mrs. Douglas, so like Louise, with her straight brows and her soft black hair, her long, graceful body, as a reed giving to the wind. She was dead, yes. And other things. And Lena. How mad he'd been for Lena! He thought of the first time that he stroked her rather coarse red-brown hair, and said: "You're like a lioness at the Zoo." She laughed, and dug her ten fingers into his shoulders like talons.

"Those were the days," thought Sir Hugh. Then he told himself not to be sentimental; doubtless, ten years hence, when he sat or stood somewhere else, he would think of himself walking past the farm where everlastingly hung the sign "New Laid Eggs", and would tell himself: "Old fellow, what a pleasant, melancholy mood you were in that morning. Those were the days." Yet he thought it merciful that yesterday should always be the day.

He concluded that the whole art of life must consist in the accumulation of memories. As if one were a dormouse, storing up nuts, and waking up now and then from that profound sleep which we call life to nibble for a moment the nut of the past and then go to sleep again. As he looked out towards Stoat's Farm, across the damp hollow where the streamers of mist rolled and unrolled like veils, he wondered what sort of nut he was putting away in his store. "Not much of a nut," he said, aloud. "It's all up with Roumania. The Germans are just

pouring in. And I wonder whether we're doing any good on the Somme. The papers say it's all right, but they always say that. Sometimes we achieve a masterly advance, and frequently a masterly retreat; anyhow, it's always the same map. We take places we've never heard of, and we forget their names when we lose them. We just dye the soil a little redder."

He was rather disturbed by Stephen's letter of the morning. It had not been the ordinary, jaunty letter, but a staccato document that recalled rather the Stephen who burst out at lunch than the old, slack Stephen. One part of it had rather upset Sir Hugh, so he took it out again and read it:

". . . saw the thing quite well from the ridge. That German brigade was out of luck that morning; I rather think they'd calculated on getting across by a ford a little higher up, but somehow our lot got to the ford first, and there they were, what was left of the brigade, pinned up against the river inside something over a square mile. Their pioneers, as they call them, had just got a sort of bridge across as I got to the ridge, and for a moment I thought they'd get across all right. Somehow we weren't firing much, but just as the head of the column was almost over, our shells began to drop, and they drew back for a moment. Then for a moment I couldn't see anything, for their pals were putting up a screen of smoke bombs. You could see them fall, pit-pat, one after the other, and a brown cloud came up. Then they started to move through the cloud, and as they did it just rained shrapnel. The water came up in spouts. I guess they were trying to get an ammunition lorry across, the idiots, for something got it, and it went up. I happened to catch sight of something in the air, sort of twirling. Looked like a man with his uniform on fire.

Then they tried their bridge again, and as their pals didn't dare put anything more across, the cloud cleared. I saw three shells fall one after the other on the bridge and men chucked to the right and left like an ant heap that's been kicked. And then, when there were hundreds in the water, their heads bobbing like corks, a couple of our planes came swooping up-stream, and from where I was I could hear the rattle of the machine guns as they potted those chaps as they swam. A couple of incendiary shells fell on the first bridge; it burned at once, and I could see men and horses plunging into the river, and the planes turning to come back, going up and down like a mowing machine upon a lawn. . . ."

How coldly the boy told it all! Killing as a trade. Sir Hugh wondered what sort of Stephen peace would give him back. He chid himself. Hang it all! There had been wars before, and anyhow these things were eternal. He turned into Stoat's Farm to talk to Keele. The old man was very bitter, for young Keele had joined up instead of sticking to the farm.

"If he's killed he won't be a shover after all," said the old farmer bitterly. Sir Hugh wondered whether he would rather see his son dead than a traitor to the land. Then they talked of potato blight. Keele had had no luck; half his crop was lost, and with masochist enjoyment he took Sir Hugh into the blackened kitchen to show him some leaves he had kept, all purplish and eaten away by fungus.

"Did you spray?" said Sir Hugh.

"Spray!" snarled the old man. "What's the good of spraying? You didn't have to spray when I was a nipper, and anyhow you can't get the sulphate, as they call it, let alone if a bee goes near a flower that's been sprayed it dies."

"Oh, nonsense," said Sir Hugh. "You know quite well you ought to have sprayed."

Keele did not reply. He knew better. When one was a nipper one didn't have to spray. Those were the days.

VIII

With a suddenness that would have surprised Monica if she had been a social student, the strike broke out. She had noticed a little group round a notice inside the factory gate, and passed it. The machines had started up. She felt rather depressed. Then she heard a voice, Ivy Badger's. "Tell you it's true."

"No, it ain't."

"Yes, 'tis."

"Well, what about it?" said Muriel Penn.

"What about what?" asked Rose.

Then Monica thought of something else. Idiots these girls were. Clank, clank, machine number three choking again. Oh, how she hated number three. Then Ivy Badger became more noticeable.

"Cheek, I call it. Why shouldn't we work overtime if we like?"

"Motherly care for our little constitutions," said Muriel Penn.

"I don't think," said Ivy. "But I shouldn't mind if they'd treated the men same as us. Their Lordships can work overtime if they want."

"It's a shame."

"Shame!" repeated the shop.

Monica intervened. "Let's have a little less talking, please," she said.

This was an unfortunate remark. The shop immediately grew infuriated, and Ivy Badger, getting off her

bench, stuck both her hands on her hips and cried: "There'll be a lot more talking before this is done. We're going on strike."

"Yes, we're going on strike!" shouted the shop, enthusiastically adopting the idea which had so far not occurred to them. Monica found herself speechless, for every girl flung down her scoop or kicked over her bench, and all grouped themselves round the corpulent form of Ivy Badger, who had climbed upon a table.

"Girls!" she shouted, "we've had enough of it. We've had enough of their old buck. If you haven't seen that notice I'll tell you what's in it: The men can work overtime, and the girls have got to knock off at six. Is it fair?"

"No!"

"Will you stand it?"

"No!" accompanied by stamping feet.

"Do you want Cottie to tell you when it's time to go home to Ma? Or will you please yourselves? I tell you I ain't come here to be prayed on and tucked up in bed, and I don't want none of their protection. I know the game. They're afraid we'll earn too much."

All the girls clapped their hands.

"Gives me the fair sick," said Ivy, with bitter irony, "and before ten minutes are over we'll give Cottie the fair sick. Come on! let's get the others out."

Monica put out a hand as Ivy was about to jump to the ground.

"Suppose you're against us," said Ivy, looking down at her, ferociously.

Then, to her amazement, Monica found herself saying: "No — I don't think so." And still swayed by the feeling that the girls had been unfairly treated, she was surprised to find herself surrounded by a cheering crowd,

who hustled her along the gangway into the next shop. It was a bewildering morning. Other centres of irritation existed, and by twelve o'clock almost every girl had come out except half a dozen blacklegs who, as Ivy put it, "might as well have come out with the others, for they'd likely be in hospital next day."

Monica thought this affair lacked ferocity, for she had a journalistic idea of strikes: meetings, sombre young leaders with burning eyes, red flags. In fact the strike was orderly. It culminated in an enormous meeting in the canteen, which was at first addressed by a few junior charge hands, but little by little resolved itself into one enormous meeting that was being addressed by everybody. Then the disturbance exhausted itself, and two resolutions were passed more or less unanimously, the opposition being disposed of by Muriel Penn, who dragged her out by one ear. They amounted to two demands, one for optional overtime, the other for the recognition of a committee of shop stewards. Feverishly Monica found herself elected steward for her shop. She felt curiously proud, rather frightened, for she did not know what this might involve. Also she was disturbed by the sounds which the opposition was making in the lavatory, where Muriel Penn and two others were converting her under the cold-water tap. Then nothing happened. One o'clock, two o'clock came, and still nothing happened. At last, at half-past two, Ivy came back, looking like a dove who had lost her olive branch, with a message that Mr. Cottenham, when asked to receive the shop stewards, had said he would see them damned first. Monica grew alarmed and inclined to resign her position. She disliked the idea of belonging to a group that Cottenham would see damned first. Then her pride rose up, revealed to her that in this strike, which seemed

foolish, mingled something splendid — a loyalty, an honest desire for freedom. Calling her colleagues together, she informed them that she was going to see the men. A few minutes later, filled with an exquisite sense of treachery, she visited the boiler house. She expected to find the men ribald and was surprised when a good many decided to join the girls. They were nice men, she reflected, not larky young fellows, but good, solid men, well over forty. She could not understand why the young men were so cool about striking.

Then Ivy returned to Cottenham, and having been refused admittance, had the audacity to cling to the outer frame of his window and inform him that the men were coming out. And the confusion increased. By four o'clock the whole factory was at a standstill, and the military guard began to patrol with an air of threatening people in general and meditating spectacular attacks. But it was only at tea time that, from Monica's point of view, the situation grew interesting. The committee sat in the canteen, wondering what to do next, when an angry hand opened the door and Cottenham strode into the room.

There was a pause of expectancy, for Cottenham was obviously angry. His was not bluster, but a cold anger, and Monica wondered how she would feel if those blue eyes, which she had always seen so soft, were ever to look at her like that. She felt frightened and small, yet, for the first time, she experienced the fulness of his attraction.

"Look here," said Cottenham, "what do you think you're up to, all of you? For one thing, do you know what this strike's about? I'll bet there's not one knows. Though, in these days I know it doesn't matter what a strike's about. One just strikes. Girls who work seem

to need a change of manager, just as girls who don't work need a change of hats. That's the story of the modern strike. But I've come to tell you that it's no use your sending me another deputation. I don't mean to receive it. If you've got a grievance, put it up through the proper channel, namely, by personal application to the manager. If you belong to a union, let your union come to me. That's all. You may as well go home; you've wasted your day."

Then, to her own surprise, Monica found herself on her feet. "I don't see it at all," she said quietly. "We're your employees; we've elected our shop stewards to represent us. We're here to put forward a grievance and," she faltered, then with an effort added, "and you're here to listen to us."

"I have nothing to add, Miss Oakley. If you and your fellow stewards, as you choose to call yourselves, can't understand what I've told you, I can't supply you with the necessary intellectual machine which will enable you to grasp my meaning. Again, good afternoon."

As soon as he had left the shop the committee exchanged stares, and broke up into two sections which quarrelled vigorously, one side proposing that the suggestion should be adopted, the other that everybody should starve first. There was also a third section which quarrelled with both of them for reasons which never became clear. In the end complete confusion prevailed, demonstrating that this was a properly constituted committee. But Monica carried away a wayward heart. It was still a beating heart, and she wondered what external force had compelled her to face and attack him. She had found delight in this assault; it was as if she had avenged her passing enthralment, vindicated herself to herself. As she walked home she thought: "After all,

he hasn't got me." She was revelling in the hypocrisy of woman, setting up as a trophy the freedom of her mind, against the inevitable surrender of her instinct, while refusing to acknowledge that no such trophy could actually balance the surrender. But all that evening she was proud, as if Merlin had sought to charm her and she had snatched away his wand.

Later only, when she tried to sleep and could not, did a new mood descend upon her as a cloud that blots out the moon. She understood better this sudden little strike which had seemed so burlesque. Of course it was a petulant affair, but in their incoherent way the girls were standing together against injustice. They were sick of being protected against their own bodily weakness; they claimed to work as long as they liked and take the consequences; they claimed that no restriction should be put upon women that was not also put upon men. Violently Monica felt that this was right, and suddenly she understood the militant suffragettes of two years before, whom she had thought absurd. They had not been absurd; they had been heroic, because they had suffered, even died, for an idea. She parodied a quotation as she remembered the woman who was killed stopping a horse at the Derby: "It is sometimes expedient that a woman should die before the people."

Then she thought of Cottenham; she knew he must be very angry with her. She supposed that he would not care for her any more. How cruel it all was! And yet she could not stop. She knew that next day she must go with her fellow stewards and face him again, until his will or their will was broken. It was agony to think that this industrial struggle must resemble their own impulses; for the first time she saw that the time must come when his desire must be repulsed or her own resist-

ance bent — bent by her own weakness. She wept a little, and when at last she felt sleepy, she had to turn her pillow over because one side was wet with tears.

The three days that followed were all confusion. The stewards, gaining purposefulness from their own activity, insisted on attending the factory, where they knitted and ate in the dirty area, and struggled against a new, dangerous current, namely boredom. This was their first strike, and if only they had been ridden down by cavalry they would have felt that it was all right, but the management took no notice of them.

Irvine had many interviews with Cottenham.

"We can't exactly give in," said the Manager.

"No, of course not," said Cottenham. "If they don't all go back on Monday morning, we'll close the factory until we can get a new lot of labour. We'll import a thousand Irish girls and their priests to tell them they'll go to hell if they don't put up the output."

Irvine shook his head. "No, it wouldn't do. The Ministry wouldn't let us: you'd have the Workers' Union calling out the girls all over the country."

"Well, I won't see the stewards," said Cottenham.

"Oh, of course not," said Irvine. "Still, one might compromise."

And a compromise came suddenly. It was a typically Irvinian compromise. The manager sent a message to the effect that he couldn't see the shop stewards' committee, but he could see individual stewards. As the composition of the committee was vague, it found itself in conference to elect representatives who were not recognised. They met a new Cottenham, less aggressive because he thought he was getting his own way. After he had made a rather vague statement to explain once more why he could not meet the shop stewards, Monica sud-

denly remembered his syndicalist speeches. She was about to cry out: "But you believe in this sort of thing!" then suddenly grew older as she understood that few men believe in anything except for others. And she told herself: "Can I use the knowledge I acquired in a way I could not reveal? Would it be fair?" To a girl of her kind the idea of fairness was so paralysing that she took no part in the conference: she belonged to a class for whom fairness consists in abstaining from doing things rather than in doing them. So, a little later, she was surprised to find that the conference had compromised, again in an Irvinian way:

"Well," said Irvine, rubbing his hands vigorously, "all's well. You agree that there shall be no optional overtime, but we lengthen the shift to ten hours and give you the option of working less."

There was a great deal of cheering, and Ivy Badger, forgetting her august position, leapt on the table and bellowed: "Three cheers for old Cottie!" and would all the ladies join 'er in the well-known hymn: "For Cott's a jolly good fellow."

At half-past six Monica flung herself on her bed. She had defied the man whom perhaps she loved, and this uncertainty made the results of her defiance complex: if they quarrelled she would not feel justified in her unhappiness. She wondered even whether she was unhappy because all through the strike he had not been near Castle Hill. Every night, as she went in, she had stopped for a moment on the steps, fearing and hoping that he would emerge from the shadow of the Park. But he did not come. Did he never mean to come again? It would be better if he did not. But he must come. For some minutes she lay without thoughts, then sprang up. No, she could bear it no more. If she must suffer,

then let it not be between walls. In that moment, like the sick king, she ached for the sea, and thought she might be healed if, for a moment, she could feel the soft marsh winds, hear the starlings rise from Winchelsea Copse, making the sound of a sail that fills in the breeze. She ran downstairs, hatless; she would go to the Medway; at least that was water. But as the door closed behind her and she stared at the high, tarnished moon, like a pan of copper in a peacock-blue sky, she found that the old expectancy had come upon her. She stood upon the steps and gazed at the black Park, the pavement gilt by the blood-red moon. For a long time she waited, waited with an increasing security and a dumb acquiescence. She was not at all surprised when the figure of a man detached itself from the blackness and ran towards her.

"Open the door, quick," he said, as he seized her by the wrist. "Quick, we'll be seen."

With trembling fingers she opened the door. As he followed up the stairs she ached with fear. Perhaps some one had heard. What would they think?

Then they were face to face in her sitting room where the lamp still burned. They stared at each other with unblinking eyes, as if still testing their strength, and she nerved herself to bear his reproaches. He would call her disloyal; he could convince her of her own folly; he would throw her class up at her and make a weapon of her recreancy. But Cottenham did nothing of the kind. He stepped forward, seized her by the shoulders and crushed her to him with a reckless brutality that was terrible and exquisite. Her mind was ready, bent as a steel spring, but she had forgotten her sensations; surprised by the embrace, her marshalled arguments were stifled in fumous pall of her physical emotion. And Cottenham, with that deep intuition that is powerful in ter-

rorism and narcotic in charm, loaded her with caresses that bewildered and distracted her, that awoke responses she thought herself incapable of, that sickened her by oversweetness, stimulated her to rivalry. At last, with a long, shuddering sigh, she flung her arms about his neck, and her face was wet with tears; her fate hung over her as the wings of a condor darkening the valley; she stood, she felt, stark and disarmed among the ruins of her will.

But as her being surrendered she felt the man stiffen and withdraw; under her drooping lids she saw a change come over that face where a second before the swollen, passionate veins had stood out. It grew mask-like, then uncertain, as if he shrank from his own victory, feared to take its spoils. She did not understand, and yet she felt this sudden fear in him; confusedly she guessed that she was offering him all that he wanted, more than he dared take. So, suddenly, she broke away, and flinging herself upon the couch uncontrollably wept. After a while he awkwardly came and stood beside her, caressed her hair as if he were asking her to forgive him for not having dared. At last she looked at him with wet eyes, so distraught that she did not even wonder whether her eyes were red or if her nose was swollen, without caring whether she were ugly.

"Go away," she murmured. "No, Frank, I'm not angry. But do go now."

He went, and there was apology even in his walk. As he went down the stairs he thought: "And I did not even leave my coat in her grasp."

Monica did not sleep that night. She was growing old with a lucid swiftness that appalled her. She understood the drifting doom that was laid on them, the incapacity to part, the incapacity to dare perils

which neither could face because neither cared enough, the endless shock of ungratified desires which must always lie between them, not only because he could not be her husband, but because the war which had seized them both, their energy, their time, which locked them in a given place, deprived them of material time to give nobility to any satisfaction they might steal.

"There's no way out," thought Monica. "It can't go on. And it can't alter. We can't even take in freedom a day of each other. It can't go on."

Next morning, as the factory gates opened, Monica entered the unit foreman's office and obtained her immediate release on the plea that her mother was very ill. Half an hour later she was in the train.

She could hardly understand herself. In that railway carriage, all alone, she was so unhappy when she thought of happiness foregone, and yet immensely relieved. She had escaped herself. With a pang she remembered that Cottenham had said: "Nothing's as good as falling in love except falling out." Yes, she had fallen out of love. Her literal mind made her think: "It leaves a gap, somehow, like a tooth." But, feeling tears near, she sought for something with which to fill that gap: she would devote herself to her father. She never ought to have left him. He loved her and needed her, and her mother could not be to him quite what she was. Nor Louise either. An exquisite sense of sacrifice invaded her; she almost believed that she was giving up love because her old father needed her companionship. It was voluptuous.

A few nights later, as she stood before the cheval glass, a tall, thin figure with pale mauve auras round her grey eyes, in her gown that fell in soft folds of oyster-grey

chiffon, she played for a moment with her chatelaine of silver and turquoise.

"Strange old Monica," she thought, "strange new Monica." Or rather, was she not something between new and old? Her skin had lost its old dead pallor, and yet the T. N. T. stain was beginning to fade from deep yellow into a creaminess that insensibly blended with the whiteness of her breast.

The fading of that colour symbolised the fading of that memory which, with daily fainter hands, still gripped at her heart.

IX

"So," Sylvia reflected, "peace didn't come this Christmas after all!" For a moment her mind dwelt on the entertainment Knapenden Place had just given to the wounded. Mother had been very much in it, trying to buck up the poor chaps; one of them had told her that he was willing to go back but wasn't in a hurry. Sylvia smiled: mother was so dead keen. Not like father; it seemed to upset him. Silly! of course men had to fight. "It had been rather fun," she thought, and for a moment remembered the boxing film which had delighted the men; what a lamb Bombardier Wells was! She had taken to one of the wounded, too, a man with no legs. Such a sport! She wondered what the stumps looked like, a horribly interesting idea. Yes, the war wasn't so bad.

Christmas, 1916! Over two years! She wondered whether next year would see the end. Then she read over again a letter from March, one of his queer, frightened, desirous letters. Strange boy! She thought of other men who were amusing her in town, an airman, and a fearfully dashing Italian officer. Good fun, both of them. But

the shrinking of March attracted her more. He had not yet told her that he loved her, but in every letter he spoke of her husband, enviously, with a hint of fear, as if telling her that Jervaulx stood between him and his object. She bared her little sharp teeth. It was good to be loved in that racked way. A few nights ago the Italian officer had kissed her in a taxi as he drove her home. What a fight that had been! She did not dislike him for it. But still her thoughts turned to the slim, shy boy, and she remembered that week-end in May when she dragged down to her lips the handsome head, as one pulls down the branch of a magnolia to bury one's face in the soft, scented flesh of its bloom.

X

Sir Hugh walked along Pall Mall. A hard, frosty, January day; the sharp wind that swept the grit on the dry, zinc-like pavements made him retract within himself, and the smooth grey sky that hung low over his head depressed him. London was losing its colour, for now the afternoon papers were no longer allowed to show placards. And he was pleasantly conscious of his self-consciousness. He thought: "Anatole France is right; meditation is a peaceful orgy. It's natural enough. Wasn't it Descartes said: 'I think, therefore I am?' But after all I am only a chimpanzee brought up-to-date by time. Anatole is right; I am merely a meditative chimpanzee."

These hard grey streets of London formed an incredible contrast to the warm coloured scene he had just left, Mrs. Van Oedelem's reception on the occasion of her daughter's marriage with David Marchmont. Such a noisy affair, such a crowd, London deprived of its ordi-

nary pleasures, and making sport of a wedding; most of the Belgian Legation, some Foreign Office men, lots of uniforms, smart girls got up as Red Cross nurses (so much more becomingly clad than the V. A. D.'s), one or two as land girls, very earnest all of them, but obviously acting in private theatricals. "The theatre of war, of course," thought Sir Hugh with tender irony. It all felt so artificial. Even the grim darkness of Mr. Vandervelde failed to solidify a scene where Mr. Balfour, benevolent, negligent, amiable, short-sighted, circled the groups, throwing out an aura of infantine satisfaction, and of wondering what it was all about.

At the corner of Waterloo Place Sir Hugh paused as cars, one after the other, veered out of Pall Mall towards the north; his eyes registered a picture that almost at once vanished. He had a vision of Sylvia in her A. S. C. uniform. She was driving a car with large plate-glass windows, in which sat a young officer. Odd! He was sure it was Sylvia, with the artistic hat dragged over the red hair, the new Sylvia, Private Jervaulx, A. S. C., M. T., in a fancy stock, and an expensive non-regulation coat and skirt cut in officer's khaki. On duty of course. Some War Office man, Sir Hugh supposed, but the sight discontented him. When Sylvia joined up he had associated her with big W. D. lorries, with purposeful cars careering through slummy roads, laden with shell or explosives. To see her drive a little man in a large car — such a polished car, such a polished driver — private theatricals again. Also this familiarity between his daughter and an unknown man offended his puritanism. Joy riding!

Then he chid himself: "Don't be Victorian, old fellow. That's an 1860 idea. Times have changed." Then Sir Hugh began to regret that times should change. He was

getting old; to see his period evanesce was a little like seeing the grey spread through the hair of a loved woman. He thought: "When one cares for a woman, one always thinks of her at the age when one first met her: it takes years to make one realise that she has grown older. I suppose it's like that with one's period. It feels like 1895, and yet it isn't 1895." Vaguely he realised that his world was disappearing, that the new woman was getting still newer, curt, capable, independent. What would she be up to after the war — when she had found out that she was fit for any trade — able to resist men? "A grand rumpus, that's what they were in for." That day he did not like the idea of a rumpus, which meant that he was growing old.

Everything told him that he was growing old. Not only was he afraid of the change in woman, but his steady old banker's mind pondered the coming War Loan, for which Mr. Bonar Law wanted a thousand millions. A thousand millions! Though the daily expenditure had already reached five millions, the figures shocked Sir Hugh. This piling up of debt bewildered him: he still visualised wealth as land; he had no proper conception of the capacities of industry, of the possibilities of trade. He did not know the North Country well, and so there arose in him no hope that Britain would catch up these enormous liabilities. He saw her sinking deeper and deeper into debt, and his pessimism extended to Germany, for the latter's industrial powers were also half foreign to him. "If we win," he thought, "it's all very well saying she'll pay. Can she pay?"

But behind these uncertainties lay something that disturbed him still more: other people thought it was all right, young men in the Treasury, hustling business men on the Board of Control. They couldn't be wrong, all of

them. They made money; they must have brains. He felt left behind in another period.

Stephen's last letter had upset him, too: Quin had been killed at Beaumont Hamel, and this seemed to have hardened Stephen. "Quin's gone West," he wrote. "They got him as he was coming back from the O. Pip. Old Quin's gone. Doesn't matter if it's to heaven or hell, it'll be an improvement. Damn the world! I hope to have a hand in blowing it up when this job's done."

Later, at his club, he found no greater assurance as he joined the little group which by the fireplace awaits dinner time. They were talking about Wilson.

"He's a true Christian," said a fat man whom Sir Hugh did not know. "Always ready to turn the other ship to the U-boat."

The others laughed, and Sir Hugh gladly shook hands with Billy Bridge, his cousin, who had just come in, quiet and grey. The men were still talking.

"You've heard his latest stunt," said another. "Peace without victory. That'd be a pretty ending to a war like this. Peace without victory!" he repeated scornfully. "I wonder when Wilson will be tired of seeing women and children drowned: if a Zepp were to drop a bomb on him we'd hear less about peace without victory."

"Do you think it's as personal as all that?" asked Sir Hugh. They all stared at him. "I mean, don't you think Wilson is working in a different — field of ideas, that what he wants is a result so indecisive that when we make peace everybody will realise that war doesn't profit a nation?"

"Well, if that's his idea," said the fat man, "it isn't ours. We haven't gone into this war for high-falutin' reasons. We've gone into it to lick Germany."

"And when you've licked Germany?"

"How do you mean?"

"Well, what next?" said Sir Hugh. "What shall we do then? Make ready for another war? Go on arming, and struggling, and scheming, world without end?"

"Certainly not," said the other man. "By the time we've won this war Germany will have had such a sickener of it that she'll never go to war again. She's got to suffer and she's got to pay, before she changes her mind. That's why we want a proper blockade, not Asquith's penny toy blockade, but the real thing. They talk of women and children! It's a lot they care about ours. We've got to get them to the point where there's hardly a German under forty who's not either dead, blind or crippled, when the civilians are going about dressed in potato sacks, and rags tied round their feet instead of boots. I'm no harder-hearted than anybody, but if we can get Germany down so that a million babies cry for milk and can't get it, and when so many of them die of cold that they have to shovel them in lumps into the same grave, then Germany'll have learnt her lesson."

There was silence. Everybody agreed, but everybody disliked having this said. An immense repulsion rose in Sir Hugh.

"Ye—s, I see," he said coldly. "But I suppose it's quite clear that nobody else ever made a war except Germany?—that there are no jingoes in France and in Japan? I suppose Mr. Leo Maxse, and the Navy Leaguers, and Mr. Hughes are all sucking doves? I suppose we keep a fleet as a little girl keeps a doll's house, and that the British Empire came together by itself, drawn by our good government? Funny! I suppose we used our fighting forces to take India and Canada from the French? I suppose we didn't really want Thibet and half Persia when we struck a bargain with the amiable

Tsar ten years ago, and handed the other half of Persia to his gentle rule? "

Then Billy Bridge gave his little harsh laugh. Sir Hugh followed him into a corner, while the men drew closer round the fireplace. He caught the word " pacifist."

For a moment Bridge looked at him with a humorous glint in his hard eyes. Sir Hugh's cousin was a very good-looking, clean-shaven man of about fifty, tall, aloofly elegant. He was a barrister, and could be taken for nothing else.

" I say, old chap," he remarked, " you're going strong, you know. Those fellows think you're a pacifist."

" They make me sick," said Sir Hugh gloomily.

" Of course they make you sick. All humanity makes one sick. In war time especially, one feels like Byron: one hates most people and dislikes the others. But really you mustn't talk like this. In war time one sets up a sort of fiction that everything one does is right, and that everything one's allies do is right, and one's blameless, and injured, and all that sort of tosh, and the enemies are just vile."

" It's not true," said Sir Hugh.

Bridge smiled. " My dear fellow, if both sides knew each other's point of view they wouldn't hate each other, and then they wouldn't fight."

" Billy, do you want them to fight? "

The barrister smiled. " Want them to fight? I don't care. It's their nature. Like Irish terriers. I don't say my country's right or wrong; I don't think any country can be right or wrong. But if my country's going into a dog-fight, I may as well see to it that my dog wins."

Sir Hugh sighed. " I don't know what's the matter with me. I didn't know I had things like that in my mind,

but all this hating and all this lying about the other side, and all this bragging about our beastly selves — it seems to stir up. It's rather rotten of me, I suppose, with Roumania cracking up, and we're doing no good on the Somme either. But I can't help it."

His cousin did not reply directly. Then, irrelevantly, he said: "Do you know that Angus Cawston has joined the Drug Control Office?"

"Oh! what is he doing?"

"He's a director of something. Antiseptics, I think."

"What ever does old Angus know about antiseptics?"

"Quite enough for a Government department. Dear old Angus! He *is* enjoying it. I told him he'd been scenting his handkerchief with lysol the other day, and, would you believe it, I think he does."

They laughed, and Sir Hugh did not that day recover his passionate moment. Indeed, in the train next morning, he was depressed rather than indignant. Everybody seemed depressed. A farmer, who talked to him at Ashford while they waited by the Hastings train, growled and snarled at the Government which had just fixed the price of wheat and potatoes. He, too, was hating. Then ten men, headed by a corporal, marched on to the platform in full kit. They wore steel helmets. Their lines, so neat and close, their air of compression and perfect fitness for their work, seemed to Sir Hugh beautiful. Quick and sharp they clanked by him, grim under their brown tin hats. Figures of romance! But marionettes upon a string twitched by an excess profiteer.

XI

She was gone. Cottenham wondered why he felt relief. It hurt him that Monica should have gone like this, without saying good-bye. Yet it was a tribute to his

attraction for her. No doubt she had not trusted herself to say good-bye to him. Gone! He sneered at himself: "I suppose I ought to feel that she's taken a bit of my heart away with her. But though I wish she hadn't gone, I suppose I'm glad she has. If she'd stayed . . . " He did not know what would have happened if she had stayed. Passionate visions formed in his mind, and then his sense of loss grew more precise. He remembered little things, how the red-brown hair curled away behind her ears, the slow droop of her eyelids, and the laxness of her when he caressed her. He clenched his hands in an ecstacy of imaginative possession. How exquisite she would have been, all surrendered, so languid, and fearful, and white! He bit his lips as he realised his baulked desire. He played some Debussy, but "Masques" was too light, and he found Bach fail him. How he hated fugues that night. Beastly old mathematician! Bach ought to have been a Cambridge don. It was by chance he found the music he needed, a short piece which he played over and over again until at last Julia knocked at the door.

"Frank!" she cried, "could you possibly play something else? You've been playing that over and over again for half an hour. It gives me the creeps. What is it?"

His fingers still lingered on the slow notes that are unearthly, blue notes and green ones. He said: "It's 'Gallows.' Raval, you know." He went on playing.

"Don't for heaven's sake, don't!" cried Julia. "What's the matter with you?"

Without answering he played again the short piece where a cold little wind sports through the dead man's hair, slowly raising one by one each dry lock on the head with staring eyes that the crows have half picked out,

while the wise, detached spider weaves a silken stock about the corpse's drawn neck.

Then, suddenly, he jumped up and with a gesture of appeal flung himself into Julia's long arms. He wanted to pillow his head upon that dark breast, upon any breast. Without understanding anything except that he was unhappy, Julia drew him close and stroked the hair where it grew hard and springy upon his neck.

"Come along," he said suddenly, "let's go and have a look at Rupert."

Rupert helped him a great deal in those months. The fat baby held for him an appeal that Lucretia and Diana had not. It was his son. It was himself. It was his vanity of survival. So an easier home life formed about him. He sat with Julia before dinner now, criticising her frocks, and invariably brought back the *Evening Standard*, so that she should not miss her daily dose of Corisande. Everything conspired to help him: his work became more exacting as the orders increased, as labour grew more restless and needed to be soothed; Julia, better assured that he loved her, loved him more; Rupert returned his passion and slept in his arms in soft, scented abandonment. Yet, all through, ran an aching sense of need. It was as if he had lost adventure, being precipitated from Romantic Crag into Everyday Valley. He lay in the grasp of everlasting hope.

Unable to suffer any more this sense of emptiness, he went up to London to see his friend Lawford, whom he hated and loved, because Lawford had always done everything better than he had, let him feel it, yet compelled him to admire him. He told him the whole story, to which Lawford merely replied:

"Drop it. You'll drop it when you've done it; why not drop it before? A girl of that kind, unless she were

married, of course, will only get you into an awful mess. If you want some fun why don't you run a jolly little girl in town? But as for this — drop it."

Cottenham truthfully replied: "Drop it, that's all very well, but somehow it's not dropping *me*."

XII

It was indeed Sylvia whom Sir Hugh had glimpsed, driving an unknown officer up Waterloo Place. The big car found its way through the traffic rather too fast, as if guided by an impatient hand. Contemptuous of all speed limits it honked and whizzed round Regent's Park, along the Finchley Road, pulling up with a jerk near Wembley Park. Sylvia turned towards the open window and said:

"You can come and sit next to me now, if you like."

With a response in which lay a little anxiety, Oliver March walked along the footboard and got into the vacant seat. As he sat down, the car leapt forward, faster than ever. Sylvia's eyes were intent upon the road, as if she were careless of her passenger. For a moment the young soldier absorbed himself in the contemplation of her profile, the steady brown eye, the short, well-moulded, rather fleshy nose, and the red-salved lips that pouted above the blunt chin. She was all desirable and yet apart, too big, too strong; her heavy gauntleted hands held the steering wheel with an air of certitude, as she might hold the steering wheel of her own life. As she craned forward, looking ahead upon the frozen white road, he thought of a Roman charioteer driving to — he did not like to think where, though his heart beat as he realised that some bourne they must attain, some Circean isle where men might be muted into beasts, or a

coast more glamorous still where a Dido would sue to an Aeneas without wisdom. This frightened him so that he insisted upon talking. Did she like the A. S. C.? Were her hours very long? What sort of jobs did she come in for? Oh? Driving old generals mostly? Cushy! Ever thought of flying? Exciting rather. Hadn't been up? What it felt like? Oh, well, at the start, as if you were leaving your boots behind. He began to describe his flight, to which Sylvia answered only: "Very interesting, but not for me; it's too risky."

"Too risky!" said the young man incredulously. "Why, I'd have thought you'd have been just the girl to take a risk."

"No," said Sylvia with a smile that uncovered her little sharp teeth. "Perhaps I'll fly when I'm forty, but life's too interesting now to risk it for a short sensation."

He did not reply. He understood her. After a moment he began to talk of his last billet, of a humorous private who insisted on consulting him as to what he should do, the man having unfortunately engaged himself to two girls; he even tried to talk about what was on at the theatres.

At last, as they reached Chesham, Sylvia said: "Seems to me you're making conversation."

He looked at her with wide blue eyes in which swam all the miseries of his childhood; with loving malignancy she increased his confusion by gripping his wrist suddenly in her gauntleted hand.

They had passed the day together. Contemptuous of rules, Sylvia had insisted upon snatching him up for a run in the Government car. March had vaguely thought of a matinee, and, who knows? of a kiss in the cab as he drove her back somewhere, a kiss that should linger on his lips during his leave, which he must devote to his

people. At bottom he was afraid of missing the evening express to the North. But Sylvia had proved irresistible.

"I'll see you get to your people, baby," she answered to his timid objections. "If we miss that train I'll drive you to Northampton to-night. Unless, of course, there's another girl you want to see."

"Sylvia! How can you!"

Sylvia laughed. He had said, "How can you!" like a girl. He was adorable, she thought, so tall, so sinewy, yet so unspoilt. They mustn't spoil him, she thought, with a tenderness in which mingled her own desire to bruise this creature too gentle.

They were alone in the coffee-room of the "Crown." Round them the little town lay entirely silent, as if hardened by the frost. Sylvia stood against the fireplace, hands in pockets, feet apart, like a man, and looked down seriously at the long figure in the armchair. They spoke very little at tea, ate and drank quickly. They tried to laugh at the public-house parlour, the colossal sideboard, the vast cruet, an ash tray presented by Cerebos, at the pictures of race horses chosen by Dewar, but an oppression, as of necessary action, hung over both. March seemed to feel it, for suddenly bending, he seized Sylvia's hand. "Sylvia," he murmured, "Sylvia . . ."

"Well?" she said. "Is that all you've got to say?"

"I often say it," he replied, "over and over again, like a song."

"And what's the end of your song?" asked Sylvia.

"Oh, don't you know? Just Sylvia."

"Oh, don't you think one might say with Cyrano: 'That's rather short, young man?' One might have said — well, many things."

He stared at her, not quite understanding: then, being

very young, and thinking as all young men that one can with a caress cut the Gordian knot of a woman's perplexity, he stood up and seizing her by both shoulders sought her lips. He was amazed to find himself repulsed, and while she smiled up at him, the back of her hand firm against his chin, he tried to understand: "Didn't she want him to kiss her? Why had she kissed him in May? Of course, everybody knew women were queer." But he was not secure enough, had learnt too little from a couple of shame-faced experiences of the easy venality open to undergraduates and second lieutenants, either to mollify her by abasement, or to dominate her by brutality. So he let her go and sat down.

He did not realise that the most experienced lovelace could have done nothing more subtle to attract this strong, half-masculine woman. She clasped both hands between her knees in an effort to resist her desire. She did not love him. She had never loved anybody, but she had made of conquest something like a sport; she was like a man who likes eating grouse, but likes shooting them still better. For a moment she was introspective. She thought of her husband. She wondered where Andy was. Up to his knees in water in some trench, very likely. Seemed rather shabby carrying on like this with Andy out there. She pushed the thought away. After all, it wasn't her fault he was out there, and if he'd been in England, no doubt she'd be doing the same thing. Well then? It didn't do Andy any more harm, if it did him any harm at all. It didn't matter where he was. What sentiment some people talked! Then she thought only of March. Yes, he invincibly attracted her, and the novelty of sudden attraction held great power over her; for Sylvia, though much courted ever since she was fifteen, had taken very little notice of men until the war. The

war had poured into her some intoxicating philter. She had experienced and experienced again, hastily, confusedly; married Langrick in a month, known other companionships, had mourned her first husband, found another, and more companionships, some too full, some superficial; made of her life a surging revue of men seeking her favour, a crisscross of meetings and engagements, promises, caresses, screaming laughter and swiftly dried tears, as if the war had pulled out some safety pin, and her emotions had begun to race beyond her government. Suddenly, she stood up.

"We must go," she said abruptly. "I'll drive you back."

Without a word March sat down by her side. The night had already fallen, and as the car swiftly whirled homewards he shrank from the solitude; there was no life in the flat, hard fields; and in the black-blue sky hung low already a white strip of moon. "Was this all?" he wondered. "Yes, of course it was all." Yet, the sensitiveness of him that was like a raw wound told him this could not be. As the white road curled and uncurled towards the horizon, he knew, in an exquisiteness of fear, the necessity to which he must submit. So he was not surprised when at the edge of a narrow wood Sylvia pulled up the car and got out.

"We've some time to spare," she said, and went into the wood. After a moment he followed. It was a wood of bare birch trees, whose thin trunks glistened in the moonlight. As he followed Sylvia he was more conscious of the dead leaves that crackled under his feet than of anything. In the middle of the wood she stopped, turned; she was adorable to him, with her moonlit white face, in which her eyes shone black as a sorcerer's magic mirror. Then, suddenly, she put out both hands.

"Oliver," she whispered thickly.

In delicious abandonment he took her in his arms, and it was with a sense of surrender rather than of exultation that he felt her hands close about him.

Strange thoughts fled through his brain as he lay in her arms on the carpet of leaves, amazed joy, incredulity, the face of the comic private, his old people in the north — if they knew; the scent of that thick brown hair so near his lips, and in the hard, still air, the loud crackle of those dead silver leaves.

XIII

COTTENHAM stared at the little panoply over the mantelpiece of his office, a grouping of rifle and machine-gun ammunition, of little anti-aircraft rounds, all springing from a tank shell stuck into its brass cartridge case. The day-shift was nearly done; he could hear the girls talk louder. Soon there was a hubbub and a scraping of feet in the change-house. Always the same thing. How much longer would it go on? Here they were in March, '17, and no forrader.

"I can't stick it any more," he thought. "We're getting on for three years of this war, and there's no end to it. Wonder if I'd feel better if I joined up? Yes, perhaps. But I'm forty. No use blinking at it. It's no catch being a second lute at forty. And there are other things. You don't mind dying, Frank, old boy, but you hate getting your feet wet. Bully beef wouldn't agree with you. And you'd hate having to do without bath salts, and packing your underclothes with Keatings. No, it won't do. You may as well stay here and do a bigger bit in the factory than you'd do out there messing about at the base."

Then he brought his fist down upon the table: "I can't bear it. Damn her. I thought I'd got rid of her." He seized a sheet of paper, began to write, then flung his pen down, and putting the unfinished letter in his pocket left the factory.

XIV

Monica sat in Sir Hugh's study. Before her lay a number of letters on which her father had pencilled instructions for reply. Her chin upon her hand, she looked at the letter before her. She had just read it for the second time. Certain phrases, paragraphs, filled her mind:

". . . One thinks one can get away, escape from life. One can, perhaps; one can shut oneself up in a monastery; one can go and shoot big game in East Africa, like the romantic heroes of — shall we say Miss Braddon? One can take on so much work that there's no time left except to sleep. Yes, one can escape from life, but one can't escape from oneself."

"Yes, he was right." Monica knew that she had not escaped: she'd only got out on ticket of leave.

"I've thought of you, and thought of you, and blessed you for going away, because I've thought it was better for you, and better for me, and, think what you will, I've done nothing, and said nothing, and wanted nothing that wasn't for your happiness. Other people might not say so, moral people, but moral people don't understand morality any better than Christians understand religion. And I've cursed you for leaving me. And I've wept for you, and screamed for you. I've written to you and I've torn up the letters. I've come in the car at night to your own lodge gate. And to forget you I've done more than I

dare tell you. And I can't forget you. Ah! if it had only been, perhaps I might forget you, but a man can't forget the future.

"I write you this letter from Bull's Field in the foreman's shanty. Do you remember? This is March, and from the moist earth thousands of little green spears are shooting. There are five primroses and nine bluebells on the bank nearest the Medway. And the little oaks have grown. Do you remember?"

Monica clasped both hands on her breast. This recurrent "do you remember" raised in her an intolerable emotion. But she must go on. For a moment she examined her present life: secretary to her father. How she loved him! Never had Sir Hugh shown such sweetness as in these, the days of his melancholy. She was doing something; she was a secretary, and busy enough. Her mother, too, put forward claims, and Monica found many hours a day filled by Lady Oakley's economy campaign. But — she had that day walked to Udimore copse where also the primroses and bluebells were shooting, where the humid scent of spring rose from the crowding moss, from the trees quickening into life. The ewes were leading across the fields lambs so young that they tottered; there were faint bleatings in the air, and the birds already were filling it with lovers' calls. She bent down to the letter eyes that were misty:

". . . Come back. You must come back, not because I need you, not because you need me but because we have already come together, long ago, and have given birth to a being made of cloud, crowned with the myrtle of my desire, with the roses of your lips. Now that being is disembodied, half with you, half with me. Come back, Monica, and at one look of your eyes that are grey and alive like running water, it shall live again, and it shall

dance for us, so light that under it not a blade of grass will bend, in its garment of golden cloud, under its crown of myrtle and roses . . .."

XV

Maud Westcott had not long maintained her sentimental widowhood. After a few weeks of drama, during which Lady Oakley was exasperated by enlarged blue eyes which gazed at her mournfully, while the maid did her hair, Westcott had completely forgotten Sutton. She had wept the dead footman, written to his commanding officer for a lock of his hair, received in reply a pipe in an advanced stage of decrepitude; then she lost the pipe and all memory of Sutton. Soon Mrs. Marsden was holding conferences with Lee in the housekeeper's room as to the behaviour of that hussy: " The poor young fellow hardly cold in his grave, and she gets off with Mr. Temple, a married man too."

This was exaggerating. Westcott had not gone off with Temple, not so much because the chauffeur adored his young wife as because intrigue at Knapenden Place carried so much publicity that it was almost impossible. So nothing precise could be fixed on the couple, except that Westcott had developed an incomprehensible interest in motors. She talked about learning to drive a car, and joining the A. S. C., but the other servants hardly thought it necessary that she should seek theoretical information by shutting herself up in the garage with Temple, and always wanting to put her head down to the bonnet at the same time as did he.

There was Keele, too, who in December had earned for Knapenden its first military medal. Now his old father, still resentful and ashamed, had to own with a sort of rage

that the boy was justifying himself, for he had obtained the Distinguished Service Cross, and been made a sergeant. The young soldier did not forget the flaxen-haired jade. Almost every week, in answer to her occasional misspelt, blotchy communications, there came to her a letter from the front, carefully written, as if in an office, a quiet, cheerful letter from which the young man excluded horrors; he courted her without rhetoric, as if determined to win her by quiet persistence and a humble consciousness of worth. Westcott would have liked something more stormy. The diagrams of the internal parts of machine-guns, which Keele sent her, being thoroughly male and entirely blind to feminine interests, did not worry her much; she threw them away, as women will always treat those sides of men which seem to them puerile. But she missed fervour in his wooing; what she really wanted was a letter with "I love you" once in every line, this interspersed with music-hall catches. Thus love would have been comic and passionate, and would have satisfied the deeper need of her kind. This Dobbin-like affection, while certainly an assurance against the future, wearied her, drove her towards Temple. The fact that the chauffeur was married added to the excitement of the affair, which was already dangerous because he was a chauffeur: the chauffeur was still a buccaneer of love in a countryside that knew little of the airman.

Still Westcott suffered from the war. Too many men had been called up, and Westcott could not have been happy in Eden, though there she might have been faithful. Also there was no fun, no cricket to raise excitement; Hastings afforded little variety on Sunday afternoon. She felt that this war had lasted long enough; she resented having nothing to do on her afternoons off except to walk alone along soggy roads. But she could not

stay in the house. Always she wandered out past the "King's Arms", stared for a moment at the wire blinds, at the body of the big bumble-bee, which last summer had fallen between the blind and the glass and there died. She would look around, at the ironmonger's shop outside which a dog slept, exchange a nod with Mr. Balcombe, or go in and buy a stamp for the sake of something to do, listen to the regular hammering of Farcet cobbling a boot, and then with a sigh wander along the lane towards the marsh.

On one of those days, just after she had passed Policeman's House, intending to go to Rye and eat chocolates, she saw in the distance, leaning against a stile, a soldier. In the faint haze that rose from the marsh on that grey spring afternoon, she could see that he was a rather small man. He rested both elbows on the stile, and stared intensely at the old toll-gate further on. His immobility bewildered her, for he was not smoking, and Westcott could not believe that a man was doing nothing, just thinking. So, as she passed, she slewed her eyes to the left. Hearing her footsteps he turned and looked at her.

The face shook and thrilled her. It was very young, meagre, almost wizened; bitterness hung about the thin lips. It was a desperate and unhappy face, so she walked away quicker, for despair was as unpleasant to Westcott as might have been an abscess. The soldier stared for a moment at the hurrying figure, then called out "Hello." She did not slacken, but her heart beat; this was not the first time a man spoke to her upon the road, and she did not snub them as a rule, but she felt inclined to run as she heard him behind her. Still, when he reached her side, she was so grateful to him for having caused something to happen that she responded gladly.

"Where are you going to?" said the soldier.

"Oh! Just about as far as turn back."

"Ah! Suppose I go along with you for a bit?"

"Please yourself. Shan't miss you if you don't."

The soldier accepted this as an invitation, and, slipping his hand through her arm, seized her wrist.

"I say!" murmured Westcott, making a movement as if to free herself, yet managing not to do so. "You're getting on, ain't you?" But as for the first time she took in the details of him, she noticed the white band on his cap. A cadet! Almost an officer! This thrilled her, so she made no resistance as the man purposefully gathered her fingers into his hand.

"What were you doing all on your lonesome?" she asked. Then, more archly: "What'll your wife say if she catches us?"

"I've got no wife. I don't want one."

"Nice thing to tell a lady the first two minutes."

"What's the good of my having a wife? She'd only be a widow before the year's out."

Westcott made as if to draw away. She hated those serious remarks. So she tried to be light: "Cheer up," she said. "Every cloud has a silver lining."

The man did not reply. Putting his arm about her shoulders as they walked, he bent and kissed her upon the neck.

"Let me go," she whispered.

"Oh! no," said the soldier, "I shan't let you go. These days one must take what one can." He spoke about himself: He had been a jockey, joined up in '14, wounded, now a cadet in the Flying Corps.

"In the Flying Corps!" repeated Westcott, staring at him with entranced eyes. "Not reely!"

The man laughed. "Yes, in the Flying Corps. We don't last long at that game. I've got my certificate; I

expect I'll get a commission in a week or two. And it's back to dear old Flanders — for good."

They were together all that afternoon, and when it was done Westcott wondered whether she hated him. His caresses, which before darkness grew more purposeful and savage than any she had known, shook her and pleased her, but the man was so very sure that he would die. It made it ghastly, like kissing in a graveyard. Still she did not refuse to meet him again, and when she came once more, a week later, it was with a little thrill of horrible attraction that she heard the commission was granted. He would sail next day.

"Shan't see you again?" she murmured, "in your Sam Browne?" They sat upon a log in the copse half way to Rye.

"No," said the soldier. "You won't see me again ever. At least I don't suppose."

Westcott did not reply for a moment. Then suddenly burst into tears. Gently the man stroked her neck, as if he did not know what to say. "Don't take on," he murmured. "I shan't be missed. I've buried better men than me, lots of them, Englishmen and Huns all mixed."

"Don't," she murmured weakly.

"But what's the odds?" he said, with forced lightness. "I'm not dead yet." He drew her closer. "After all, I've met you before my time's up. Might have been worse." He kissed her so that she shrank. Then she grew rigid in his grasp as he whispered in her ear.

"No," she murmured. "No, please don't."

His voice came to her as through a curtain.

"I shan't last. Life won't give me much more. You can't say 'no' to that."

"Please, please . . ."

But she shuddered in his arms, and was too weak to

resist. A preposterous cry rose up in her: the scent of impending death, the need for universal sacrifice, the need to bear witness in the only way possible to her futility seemed to gather her up and make her powerless for anything but the need to express the first nobility which had ever grown in her sluttishness. So she flung her arms about his neck as if expressing in her clasp: "Hail, Love! those who are about to die salute thee."

XVI

Monica had returned to Rochester the prey of so many anticipations, emotions, plans, that they neutralised each other in her mind, reduced her to a blankness which amounted to an abdication of will. She had gone back less because she wanted to than because she found herself unable to want anything else. And it had been easy, as if the old bottle had been waiting for the new wine. When she asked to be taken on again at the staff office, nobody seemed to remember her or care about her. The same day she found herself in the pressing sheds, at work which did not greatly differ from the old. She nearly regained her rooms; her old drawing-room floor was occupied now by new people; at the top still lived the head clerk of the Stroud factory, with his little girl and a new baby, but the elderly spinsters having just gone, Monica took the ground floor: as this had been furnished by the same hand as her old rooms it had a brotherhood with them. She slipped back into the old life. And it went on, naturally, as if indeed this were an act of fate. She telephoned Cottenham from a call office, and on the second night met him in Bull's Field.

That indeed was an exquisite moment, for she was first at the tryst. He was right; it was lovely. The primroses

and bluebells were dead, but wild anemones were blooming on the bank, and the little oaks were green. As the door closed behind him, and he ran across the turf, she clasped both hands across her breast and closed her eyes; it gave her an emotion too poignant to see him run, alert, his blue eyes so bright. Yet that first evening left her half satisfied. She had made a vague plan; they would talk; they would recognise their need for each other; they would arrive at decisions, and then harmoniously live the lives laid down for them by destiny. It did not happen like that: with indrawn breaths they fell into each other's arms, and there stayed, caressing each other, capable only of greedy caresses and swooning surrenders, speaking not at all, able only to communicate by the soft murmurs of lovers. It had gone so fast, and as ever he had been aware of flying time, had loosed the long hands from his neck and with a cry, half of pain, half of rage, had left her lying, eyes buried on her arms.

She brought it up that night as she sewed. Her mind was clear now, for they had met again; the first urgency being past, they had talked. She understood herself better now. She stood resigned before a growing inevitable. The centre of her thoughts was occupied by his phrase: "After the war." Yes, she did not know what must be, but it must be after the war, when the times would be new and liberties regained. Monica was no longer subjecting herself to moral analysis. All she could think was: "I'm in for it," and she was inclined to let herself peacefully drown. She was not happy: she was only sentenced to pleasure. But a sentence beyond appeal.

He, too, shared her sense of doom. Somehow they had come to a clear conclusion, and he had to talk of it. Now they met every evening in Bull's Field, which was shrouded by mists soft as the ghosts of pearls.

"I don't know how we'll do it," he said, "but we must. Just now we're so tied. Three-quarters of an hour here and there." She pressed closer to him. "I wish I could do without you."

"Frank," she asked, "are you sorry I came back?"

He grasped her in a sort of despair, and with the boldness which made him adorable to women said: "Yes, I'm sorry you came back. I wish you were dead. But I'm glad to my very marrow you've come back. I want you as I've never wanted a woman. It's a sort of fever, and it's got to burn itself through, or I'll never get it out of my system." He laughed. "A nice way to court a girl, isn't it? The truth has its appeal to women: they hear so little of it. And you're just the same. You don't know it as I do; you're innocent, and I've twenty-five years of debauchery behind me, I'm glad to say, and I wish I had more. But you're just the same. You can't do without me. Is that true?"

She looked up at him with humble eyes. "I suppose so," she said.

He understood women's surrenders too well to ask for more clarity. If she surrendered her will, was she not giving more than her body? She was giving him a call on her life. "After the war," he repeated. "Oh! I know it sounds all wrong. We can't marry. We know it. And we can't let each other go. Well, we must resign ourselves to it. When we're free, when we've time, when we're not hunted and persecuted by publicity, supervision, compulsion to be at certain places at certain times . . ."

"I wonder if we'll be happy," said Monica.

"No. Nobody's happy. One has moments, that's all. And we shall have more than most."

She bowed her head; her vision of the future was vague, since she must accept the clandestine. She couldn't help

it. Then there would be none of these jars; she would have him to herself at any time; he would lie upon a sofa, smoke a pipe, read a newspaper, take no notice of her until he was royally minded to call her to his side. And then she would sit down upon the floor, and humbly taking his hand place it upon her cheek, asking no more until he saw fit to confer it.

So they met almost every day. They were living in the future rather than in the past, and though sometimes the madness of spring filled them, inflamed them with an ardour which frightened him and left her weak, the promise of that harmonious future preserved them from finalities. It was agony to him. Cottenham thought: "It can't go on. It will be too much for me, and then we shall both be in a trap, irretrievably committed to each other, inaccessible to each other. After the war, oh, mercy, after the war."

But Monica was happier than he, for she had surrendered her will, thus her responsibility. He was right. They must refuse each other the gladness of full giving until they were free, and meanwhile maintain their link. But she knew also that she agreed with him, and that if reflection or accident changed his mind or forced his action, she would still agree with him. She had abdicated. Now and then she escaped this thrall. Once or twice she thought of flight. But in the end she always told herself: "What's the good? He's right. One can't escape from oneself." Yet her innocence strove to survive the wreck of her will. She was writing more often to Hurn, as if begging him to defend her. But Hurn did not understand her vague appeals or unconsciously subtle phrases. He still wrote her passionate, egoistic letters in which his religious temperament found expression in the form of virulent titanism:

"This war makes one hate God. I don't know whether He is the God of battles and enjoys the whole thing as He enjoyed the smoking holocaust of oxen four thousand years ago — there are smoking holocausts enough to please him in no man's land — but anyway He's let it happen. Omnipotent! and He's let it happen. Omniscient! He knew it in advance and He's let it happen. I hate Him . . ."

Hurn frightened Monica. Could she love anti-Christ? And was he anti-Christ? She vaguely felt that the man who hates God confesses him. Besides Hurn could not reach her emotions because he had come half-near to them. If he had been a stranger he could have influenced her; if he had been her lover he could have influenced her; but he chose to stand between the two and was powerless.

So, day by day, as spring raced into summer, she let herself peacefully sink. What else could she do? Sometimes she asked herself whether she loved Cottenham. In a way she knew that she did not, and she was sure that he did not love her. He had never even said so. In the rarest moments of exaltation he had said: "I adore you," or "I want you," but he had never said simply: "I love you." She knew instinctively that he shrank from such a lie. Did she need him to love her? Yes, at first she had needed it; often he had hardened and shrunk away from her when she murmured: "Do you like me?" forcing him to reply or to evade, knowing very well what she wanted him to reply. No, they did not love each other, but in a way it was worse; they did not love each other and yet they did not know how to part. So she allowed the thrall to grow heavier upon her, a thrall less of the senses than of the mind, to a woman the most fatal. It was in his intellectual moods he held her most power-

fully, when he did not look at her, and talked half to himself.

"Do you know," he said abruptly, one day, "it strikes me I'm a parasite. I'm just getting richer and richer."

"Isn't that what every business man does?" asked Monica.

"Yes, that's the devil of it. Richer and richer. And what next? What am I to do with my money? Leave it to Rupert who'll blow it. I don't mind his blowing it, but what an end! Seems to me one ought to do more with money. But nobody does. Look at our millionaires, building model villages for a thousand people, while their factories wreck the bodies of a hundred thousand; creating libraries, and endowing universities where they teach young men chemistry, woodwork, the history of kings and battles, and all that sort of tosh, and how to run a machine so that a million toothpicks may bloom where only one bloomed before. A pretty orgy of millionairism! The millionaire is the most venomous of human benefactors. By degrees he is driving all the clever young workingmen into education shops — driving them into a pen where they shall browse the rank grasses of practical knowledge and drink from the poisoned wells of capitalist teaching. The working classes will have to blow it all up, educate themselves, instead of letting us spoil them. Our class, we're just warpers, curiosity blunters, murderers of wonder and of change."

She listened to him, shaken and delighted. "How you've conquered me!" she thought. "Whatever you think, I seem to think. Do I think?"

XVII

At the end of April, following on a telegram, Monica went up to the New Hospital at Rye. Family influence had been hurriedly marshalled to get Stephen evacuated from the base hospital. Now she sat by his bedside, half stunned by the suddenness of it all. When she heard that he was severely wounded it had seemed unreal; it was incredible that her brother should be lying there, looking so ordinary, and yet silent, with an air of absence. He was badly hit in one leg, and seemed to be suffering from shell-shock. He was conscious, addressed everybody by their name, but had nothing to say; he lay absorbed in private thoughts. To enquiries he answered only "Yes" or "No." The hour which Monica spent by him with Lady Oakley, who was so determined to smile and look cheerful that she made grimaces, was entirely ghastly. As Stephen hardly answered them, by degrees they ceased to have anything to say, and sat on, smiling, executing a duty, feeling hatred mingle with their sorrow. Monica was full of shame as she realised that she was glad when the matron turned them out. She was glad, as one is when at last the beloved is dead after long disease, when the body is cleared away and one is free. And she had to be optimistic, to cheer her mother who unrestrainedly wept in the High Street.

"He'll be all right, mother. Everybody says so; the doctor says so, so does Sister. And Louise is going to look after him herself." But Lady Oakley could hardly be consoled. She knew that he was not going to die, but it injured her maternal pride that her only son should take so little notice of her. Badly wounded, yes, but she was his mother. She was so unhappy that Monica felt remorseful and ashamed. When, late in the afternoon,

she took the train back to Ashford, she told herself that she ought not to go. She had left them so unhappy, Lady Oakley crying quietly, and Sir Hugh pretending to read "Contes Cruels", putting down his book, nervously pacing his study, or playing with the fluffy red gold of Kallikrates's ears. "Ah! Kallikrates didn't care. He went on purring, and drinking milk, and begging for toast. And when he wanted you he put an enormous paw, lined with orange velvet, upon your knee. And when he didn't want you he just walked away, leaving behind him a trail of contempt. Oh! fortunate cat, aloof from all passions and all responsibilities, centre of his visible world, on whom no emotions are enjoined and that dwells on an Olympus below the crest of which loves and duties hang pale as clouds. Like a god, looking down without emotion or curiosity on little servant men."

But she knew she could not stay. She had not the will to stay unless Cottenham told her to. As the train puffed out of Rye this suddenly struck her as terrible, and for a moment she revolted. As the train ground its brakes and stopped, she leapt on the platform. She wouldn't go. No, it was too much! Go back to a man who didn't love her, and whom she didn't love, when her brother lay there, dying perhaps, and her people beginning to mourn him. But a few moments later, as she reached the Gun Garden, her courage ran out. What was she to do now? Cottenham would want her. "Oh!" she thought, "if only I could believe it was a sin it would help me." She prayed for faith, but she could think only of the Church of England. Suddenly she remembered that a few yards away lived Monsignor Lublin. She had not seen him for a long time, as he seldom left the monastery. Somebody must help her; perhaps he could.

The old priest almost at once ceased to enquire as to

the health of her family and her doings. The fine instinct which had made him master of so many souls told him she had a purpose. So he waited, his thin, beautiful hands joined; a faint smile lay upon his lips, while the deep eyes under the black brows held no inquiry. Monica found her thoughts stray: "How beautiful he was! That exquisite, disdainful nose!" Then she forced herself.

"Father, I want you to receive my confession."

"It is impossible, my child, until you are received into the Catholic Church."

"I can't do that, I don't believe. At least, I mean, I suppose I believe in the way I've been taught. That's not the real way, is it, the Vicar's way?"

"It is not for me," said Monsignor Lublin, "to criticise your faith. Your fate rests entirely in your own hands."

"Don't," cried Monica, holding out her hands, "don't push me away like that."

"I'm not pushing you away, my child," said the old man gently. "If you want to come to us you will find our arms open if you have faith."

"What is faith?"

The priest hesitated. "Faith," he said, "well, it's a thirst. Some of us find the Brook."

"I don't understand," said Monica.

"You don't need to understand. You cannot understand. All you have to do is to believe."

"Believe? You mean in sin and hell?"

He smiled. "What barbarians you people are! Such little things!"

"Little things! Hell's not a little thing."

"No, of course not. But don't be afraid. Hell is not a lake of flaming pitch. It is the ultimate metaphor

of human misery. And as for sin, dear child, don't think of sin; think of God and then there will be no sin."

"I am sinning," said the girl obstinately. "It's killing me. I beg you, let me confess to you."

"It cannot be," said the old priest. "But if you like to talk to me as to an old man whose watch you smashed when you were a tiny baby, do so."

After a long pause Monica tried to speak, but tears choked her. Monsignor Lublin made no effort to still her, but gently stroked her hand. At last she smiled at him, and with sudden resolution told him the little which had happened, and all that the future held. He listened, showing neither disapproval nor sympathy. Then he said: "My child, why do you come to me with a question in your mouth when you know the answer?"

"I don't know the answer, father."

"You do. You know that you must not see him again."

"I must."

"You spoke of sin. This is sin."

"I know. I can't help it. Oh! father, forbid me to sin."

"I cannot forbid you to sin, Monica. I am not your director. I'm only your friend. If you were received into the Church it would be different."

"Then receive me."

"But you told me you have no faith."

"I don't know. I must have faith. I need faith."

The priest shook his head. "No, my child, we cannot take you on those terms. You must be with us or against us."

Monica clasped his hand so violently that he drew back as he felt her finger nails. "Don't push me away. Don't

tell me I mustn't see him again. Let me go back to him and tell him it must end."

"You must do as you yourself decide. He is an occasion for sin."

"Ah!" cried Monica with exultation. "You do forbid me to go back."

He smiled at her craft. "No, my child. If you go back, you go at your peril, protected only by the tradition of your class and the moralities of your education. No guardian angel can walk by your side. I can advise you as a man; I cannot govern you as a priest."

"But, oh!" cried Monica, in a tone of despair, "father, you don't understand. We've done no harm. Let me tell you more."

Monsignor Lublin rose and held out his hand, palm outwards.

"No, my child, you shall not add to your sensual indulgences the voluptuousness of confession."

Then Monica jumped up. "I see you won't help me. It's all talk; you're like the rest. Father, I thought better of you. I hate you!"

Monsignor Lublin bent his head. "It grieves me to hear you speak like this, Monica, but blessed be grief, for it sanctifies. Good-bye. Take no command from me, but my dear, dear child, don't you know quite well that you mustn't go. Listen, if you do not go it will perhaps mean that faith has begun to work in you, and that if you are victorious it shall shoot forth the lilies of Paradise."

"Good-bye," said Monica thickly, as she shook his hand, and went out very fast with bent head. No, not even the anointed could help. He was only a full stop in the phrase of life.

XVIII

KALLIKRATES sat on the corner of his master's desk, profoundly asleep, profoundly aware of his surroundings. Paws folded, tail furled, blunt head deep sunken into his heavy ruff, shoulders hunched, he slept, dreaming a world full of fleshly lusts, and devoid of peril. As Sir Hugh came in he raised his eyelids to show the narrow lunes of his eyes, and opening a rosy mouth gave a little cry, half a welcome, half a protest. Sir Hugh smiled: He liked to be noticed by Kallikrates. For a moment he tickled the cat behind one ear, invaded by a little sensual thrill as the hard head raised itself to his hand, and the smooth chin extended more and more in an attitude of abandonment. Then he laughed:

"Sultan! Debauchee! Don Juan! Casanova! Petronius! Demetrios!. Marguerite of Navarre and Maria Monk! Thou dost contain all their sensuous souls, oh, Kallikrates, lascivious and epicene! Is this not for thee a world of velvet and down, padded against all shocks, running with the milk of Canaan and the honey of Hymettus? When the last constellations faint and fall, as thine own Sussex poet says, thou shalt neither faint nor fall." He poked the cat suddenly in the ribs: "Get up! you fat yellow pig. Don't you know there's a revolution going on in Russia? Don't sit there, and purr, and be superior to such things. I'll have no Plato in this house urging me to moderation and aloofness. What do you think I keep you for? Charity brat! Not to sit there, like a sham Socrates, pleading by your inaction that life and death are the same thing."

Kallikrates very slowly rose, yawned enormously, stretched and lay down again on his side, his rosy nose hidden between his hind paws. Alone, a watchful strip

of yellow eye showed that he was ready to bite and claw if the sacred fur of his belly was touched. For a moment Sir Hugh thought only of his cat's beauty. Then he came to regret that in the present times beauty should be so little cared for, so easily abandoned, when little mortals took to political agitation. "Yet," he thought, "I'm no better than the others. If I'd any sense I'd sit down and read 'L'Education Sentimentale.' Instead of which, here am I wondering whether I should exult because Ahasuerus has fallen, that Tsar whom the blood of my Whig forefathers abhors. Instead of Flaubert, I'm going to assimilate a large number of newspapers, to be told that the Tsar was plotting a separate peace, and try to believe that the Nihilists who have overthrown him, Tolstoyans, people mixed up with every Pacifist movement for the last thirty years, have broken him because they want to go on with the war. I am going to horrify myself with stories about Rasputin, which have suddenly become scandalous now that they are advertised. Woe to me in my chaos! I suppose I believe in royalty and in authority — and yet I am bidden rejoice because a Tsar falls, to ask for the head of the Kaiser and of Francis Josef, the Lord's anointed, all three, whose fathers were our allies against Napoleon, another Lord's anointed, whom we shut up at St. Helena. There must be something wrong with the respect we bear monarchy, for we seem to respect it only when it's on our side. Like the heathen, who gives his idol a licking if it doesn't get what he wants."

Still he caressed the harsh fur of the cat's back. "Kallikrates," he said, "though you never speak you bear witness to truth, to the importance of material things, taste, smell. You know that government, culture, flags, all those things, pass above the common emotions of man-

kind; that a German tax-gatherer is much the same as an English one; that people are much alike, as uneducated, as vain, as intolerant, and you tell me that whatever flag floats over your head, the sun is as golden, kisses are as sweet, and verse not different in its melody. Kallikrates," he murmured, "if you were a man I don't think you would have joined up."

Then Sir Hugh brought out his lighter, for matches were scarce at Knapenden. As he struck the spark the cat looked at him, as if outraged, wrinkled his nose, for he hated the smell of tobacco. Then, as the long strip of tinder dragged by him, he seized it with his teeth and front paws, rolling on his back to kick it. Sir Hugh smiled: "Even the accidents of war serve thy pleasure, oh, cat!" But soon his mood grew less meditative, and he forgot to think, so absorbed was he by the beast who expended such ferocity on chasing round the carpet the toy of the day.

XIX

"I SUPPOSE your ladyship knows that Cradoc has come back," says Mrs. Marsden.

"Come back?" said Lady Oakley. "How d'you mean, come back? So far as I know, he's in prison, right place for him; and the last I heard of him he was hunger-striking."

"Yes, your ladyship. He was, but they've let him out."

"Whatever have they done that for?"

"Well, your ladyship, they're saying in the village that he wouldn't eat, and they had to feed him by force. They put a tube up his nose and pumped food into him that way. I think that's a nasty thing to do: don't you think so, my lady?"

"I could think of nastier things to do to conscientious objectors. I don't see why they bother to feed them at all. There was the food in his cell, and if he chose to starve himself, surely that was his business."

"Yes, my lady, but they say in the village that they're afraid of letting them do that, because it gets into the papers, and it makes a lot of talk in Parliament, they say."

"Talk," said Lady Oakley savagely. "Yes, you're right. Talk, talk, there's nothing but talk. We want a Man. The sort of man who'll close down Parliament and make an end of all this talk. Carping and criticising! Fussy little Radicals, and people who call themselves Labour, who'll vote for anybody if you'll give them enough beer. But never mind that; d'you mean to tell me that he's running his shop?"

"Yes, my lady. And I wanted to talk to your ladyship about that, because Evenwood's is going to close."

"Yes, I know. I suppose now that Evenwood's dead and that young Evenwood's in the army somebody else will have the shop. But I thought Evenwood's sister was running it."

"Yes, my lady, she is. Mrs. Martin's her name, but she can't stay; her husband's a carrier at Rye and he wants her back. So I expect they'll close the shop, and where shall I order the groceries, my lady?"

"Oh!" said Lady Oakley. "I see. Mrs. Marsden, I suppose you're not suggesting that we should deal with Cradoc?"

"Oh! no, my lady. But what am I to do? It takes such a long time getting things from the Stores."

Lady Oakley became thoughtful. "I'll let you know to-night; I am going to the village, and I'll see. Meanwhile don't do anything. If you need anything you can

tell Temple to go and fetch it in the car at Hastings. If necessary you can send him to Scotland, but please understand that you're not to buy as much as a bluebag from Cradoc."

Mrs. Marsden's account of the affair was roughly correct. When the visiting justices went over Robertsbridge gaol they found Cradoc in the infirmary, and one of the justices tried to make him "realise his duty as an Englishman in the national emergency." Cradoc did not say much; he was feeling very weak, for he had been forcibly fed by nasal tube for nine days in succession. All he remarked was: "I've made my case. You can see what proof I'm giving that I meant what I said."

"Yes, I know," said the justice, and discussed at length the desirability of Cradoc's accepting alternative employment under the Pelham Committee.

"I can't do it," said Cradoc. "I'm sorry, but I can't accept any work which the Government looks upon as equivalent to war work. I'd be releasing another man to fight, and that would be the same thing as fighting myself. No, I'd rather stay here and die here."

"Oh! nonsense," said the justice. "Nobody wants to hurt you. We only want you to be reasonable." Then he grew meditative. It was all very well; his own position was quite clear; everything was being done under the supervision of the prison doctor. Still, if this obstinate fellow died, and he looked as if he might — the *Daily News* and the Labour papers made such a fuss about this sort of thing, and the sentimentalists in the country got excited about it, and there were questions in the House, and statements, and all that. In the end a paper printed an open letter to a brutal somebody, very like a brutal visiting justice. Very annoying!

Cradoc grew sympathetic. "I'm sorry to be a nui-

sance. You'd much better let me go. All I want is to mind my grocer's shop and do no harm to anybody. The other grocer in my village has just died, I hear, so mine's the only shop."

The justice gave a perceptible start. "Oh! is it?" he said. "You say the other man's just died?"

"Yes. My sister wrote to me about it yesterday."

"Oh!" said the justice, "well, we'll see."

The Pelham Committee was delighted. It did not trouble to interview Cradoc, or to obtain from him guarantees of good conduct. They thought it a great opportunity to declare that the unique grocer of Knapenden was of national importance, and at the same time to avoid the possible scandal of a conscientious objector being allowed to starve himself to death. So the prison gates fell open, and Cradoc was barred out into freedom. It was a sad and rather sick man who entered the shop that spring afternoon. Miss Cradoc took no notice of him, measured out the quarter of tea that her customer wanted, and then only turned to him:

"Oh! So it's you."

"Yes. How's the shop?"

"So-so. Didn't do well after you were took. Still, I'm carrying on."

The man sat down on a case of sugar. His legs were giving way.

"Feeling queer?" asked his sister.

"A bit. Forcible feeding's bad for one's digestion."

"Ah! well, when you're better you'll be better."

Yes, old Ethel was not sentimental. In a few days Cradoc recovered some of his strength, but he had acquired in prison a brooding habit, so he did not approach his old acquaintances. This was fortunate, as it prevented him from finding out that nobody wanted to talk

to him. He passed so much of his time in the fields round Ascalon Farm, always hoping to see Molly Hart, that he did not realise the atmosphere of boycott. It was his sister told him in the end. It seemed that Lady Oakley had interviewed Mrs. Martin, failed to persuade her to keep open Evenwood's shop, and had in the end arranged with her husband, the Rye carrier, to bring free of charge, for the duration of the war, any groceries that Knapenden might choose to order. She had personally gone round to the principal residents of Villa-Land, and gained a good deal of support for her views. The fact that groceries were a little cheaper in Rye had perhaps also something to do with the local decision not to deal with Cradoc.

"There's some ain't in it," said Miss Cradoc. "Those who want pen'orths; there's just that bit of trade left. And there's some have got to run out and get something they've forgotten after the carrier's called. Suppose we shall make ends meet. And if we don't we won't. Time will show."

Cradoc said nothing. The boycott did not surprise him: subjected to universal obloquy, jailed, jilted, he was not much interested in his livelihood. He was growing blunted; the *Herald*, the *Workers' Dreadnought*, which he received every week, together with occasional pamphlets from the Hastings Independent Labour Party, and the No-Conscription Fellowship, came to him as from a strange world, a place where men still hoped to make their views prevail and to create a universe where there should be no war because all men had understanding. The labour and pacifist movements took place for him on a distant stage, and he could not believe that he played a part in the play. Once he thought: "I'm like an old actor, broken down, who can't take up his part again when they revive the old play." And because he was

human he thought less and less of ideas. He was content now to enjoy so much as he could the spring bursting on every hedgerow, to eat his insufficient meals, for the earnings of the shop were barely enough to keep him and his sister. And he thought a great deal of Molly Hart. Short, square, milk-white Molly, lovely, strong Molly; she too, he supposed, could never again play her part when they revived the old play.

XX

Stephen lay back in the invalid carriage. The hot July morning made him rather restless; and when he was restless he perspired, because he was rather weak; his leg ached too; it took long to heal. Louise, who sat by his side, quiet and cool in her semi-hospital costume of white drill, put down her sewing; as if instinct told her what he needed she took the pillow from his back, lifted his coat by the collar to give him air, and turned the pillow so that he might set his head against a cool surface. He sank back contentedly. And Louise took up her sewing without a word. Then Stephen reflected that he was feeling better; he liked the silent comfort of Louise's companionship. She spoke little, but she was always reassuringly there. Also he could not resist the sweetness of the morning. From his chair on the south terrace he could see the marshes gleam green and melt far away into the darker sea. Below his feet lay the ragged lawns, uncut that year, for Peele alone was left of the gardeners; the flower beds screamed with luxuriant life, with fat red and yellow begonias, with verbena, spreading little hands bright as amethyst; there were tall heliotropes, and, at each corner, broad bushes of hydrangea

laden with pale hemispheres tinted as a maiden's dream of passion. Irrelevantly, he said:

"It's a pity you couldn't come to the meeting. You missed mother. She's priceless."

"I'd have come if I could," said Louise, "only I was on duty. I'm told it was a pretty big meeting."

"Well, most of the village came with their mouths open, and went out the same. The stockbroker from Villa-Land talked a lot about being a Britisher. Being a naturalised Dutchman, he would. But mother was topping."

Louise looked up and smiled. It was good to hear Stephen talk lightly again. When he came back in April he had hardly spoken for a month. Then there had been outbursts of bitterness that nobody could understand. She did not know whether it was worse to hear him talk in unnatural excitement, or to watch him brood with knotted brows that came down low over the high nose. Now he was actually smiling, and she did not understand, until he nodded towards Sir Hugh who sat at the corner of the terrace where the elm threw shade:

"Can you see father? He's reading the *Spectator*. He hates every word of it, but he doesn't know that."

"He's a perfect dear," said Louise.

"He is. Somehow the *Spectator* is suitable for perfect dears. So like a hot-water bottle. No, a tepid water bottle. Whiggery and water. But there you are, that's the Oakleys all over. Subscribed to the *Spectator* in 1830 and they can't stop. Ah! he's put it down. What's that he's reading now; can you see?"

"I think it's the *Nation*."

Stephen laughed. "Oh! that's much worse. He agrees with every word of it, and he hates it. Poor old father! It's an awful fate to think you're born to a thing when

you really worship the reverse. His tradition is always struggling with his intellect. Not like mother. Mother's a solid."

"What d'you mean by a solid?" asked Louise. Yes, he was pretty normal that day.

"Oh! a cube, a thing with angles. No mistake about it. Mother knows what she thinks, except that she doesn't."

"Stephen," said Louise, "you mustn't talk like that about your mother."

"Why not? It's not a merit to be a mother; in most cases it's an accident. Now I've shocked you. No, I suppose I haven't. You're not the shockable sort. Things don't amuse you or displease you; you just go paddling downstream, keeping in the middle."

"That sounds very dull," said Louise, smiling.

"Oh! no, it's so jolly human, so balanced. You're rather like Kallikrates, you know, slithering through life. And you're a good-looking couple." For a moment Stephen felt inclined to add a phrase more tender. Yes, Louise was very good-looking, with that piled dark hair, that white skin, and that immense, secure repose. But Lady Oakley still filled his mind.

"By jove, mother let them have it hot and strong. Told them they were thriftless, improvident, unpatriotic, hinted they were disloyal, gave a side kick to drunkenness, dissent, and other form of immorality, and took all their names, landing a punch to the right and a punch to the left, and leaving a war savings certificate stuck to every face within her reach. Mother's topping. Such vim! makes me feel quite old." He joined his finger tips and spoke as if to himself: "Mother's got all the luck: she believes in things. Good for her! She wants to flog the conscientious objectors, to shoot the pacifists, to hang the

profiteers, and as for the fellows who trade with the enemy there's nothing she wouldn't do! Yes, mother's got it bad. This war's upset her applecart. We've had three solid sittings since I came back, all about atrocities and torpedoing, and flame throwers, and gas. Oh! the amount of gas that has got into this house would clear Flanders. It's her literature gets into her head."

"What literature?" asked Louise.

"Those continual doses of *Morning Post* and *Globe*, with a touch of *Daily Mail*, to make them bubble. Nothing like printers' ink to produce gas. Let alone her war books! I asked her to send up something for me to read; I wanted something mild and amiable like the 'Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi', or 'The Rosary', or something, and would you believe it: Westcott came along with four Kiplings, a Boyd Cable, 'Ordeal by Battle', 'Degenerate Germany', 'The Beast of Berlin', the complete works of Ian Hay, the confessions of nine spies, eighteen Kaiser governesses, five imperial dentists, and one royal vet."

"Don't be silly," said Louise, laughing. "You know quite well your mother's a darling."

"She's a very agitated darling. She talked to me yesterday for an hour to demonstrate that this country was ruined by talk: shut up Parliament, shut up the Cabinet, shut up the papers, shut up everything except Colney Hatch and the Tower, both being of National Importance. Mother's ideal is a war run by a cabinet of Kitcheners who say 'yes', or 'no', or, on great provocation 'go to hell.' Sort of military penny-in-the-slot machines. You just push in a vote of credit, give 'em ten million men that you haven't got, pull the lever and out comes victory. Oh! mother's topping. Have you heard her on the League of Nations?"

"No," said Louise, "does she believe in it?"

"Of course she believes in it. Everybody believes in the League of Nations, though they've all sworn not to have it. Mother's League of Nations is a beautiful thing: conscription all round, more ships, tariffs on everything, and no truck with Germany for a hundred years. No German in the League of Nations. Everybody to be nice and friendly and keep their powder dry. Germany to be completely wiped out, after which she's to pay the total cost of the war. She may keep the rest of the profits, unless she has to hand those over to maintain a friendly international league that she's not to be let into. You see, mother's got no idea of an evolving world. Thinks motors immoral. She doesn't imagine that anything's ever going to alter, and doesn't want it to. Republics could pop up all round her, like mushrooms. She wouldn't see it made any difference. All round her trade unions are forming, but she doesn't see it. Governments take over railways and mines, probably for good; she doesn't see it. As it was in the beginning, forever shall be. You'd surprise mother if you told her there isn't a Board of Trade, but she'd fight tooth and nail to prevent your abolishing it."

"I think you're very disrespectful, Stephen," said Louise. "Still, we mustn't be hard on you. You're a spoilt child. I suppose we must make allowances for you."

"You needn't. I got knocked over, but I'm tough. They started toughening me the first day. It's a tanning process, the army. No sensitiveness allowed there. I remember my first bayonet instructor. He was an expug, that is boxer. That chap was the one to develop the innate gallantry and chivalry of youth. He used to lecture us on the spirit of the bayonet. 'I've only two

watchwords,' he used to say, 'one is that fighting is the profession of the soldier, and the other one is: no prisoners. You've got to make it a rule not to leave behind you a man unkilled. If you're any good at your job you'll kill so many that you won't be able to count them in your memory.'"

"Don't," said Louise.

"Yes, that's just like you civilians. You sit there and cheer when we go out, and hang out the bunting, so that we may be in fine fettle when we go out to scatter the Hun's guts, but you'd rather not hear about it, thank you. We've just taken Vimy Ridge, and the French are pouring over Chemin des Dames. D'you think that was done by the kid-gloved Dandy Fifth? You people who let war happen, I'd like you to know that when the job's done, the field is like the devil's nursery, where somebody's been breaking open men like toys, to see what's inside."

At that moment Lady Oakley came down the steps, very big and very handsome in her blue linen coat and skirt and atrocious country hat. She caught his last words.

"Stephen, you mustn't get excited. You shouldn't talk about the war; you know quite well it's bad for you. Though heaven knows there's nothing else to talk about in these days, and the way things are going there might never be anything else to talk about. If only somebody would handle the thing properly! There isn't a man in the Cabinet who isn't tender to the Hun. There isn't one of them doesn't soak his handkerchief when one asks why they don't start bombing Hun towns."

"I expect we'd bomb 'em if we could," said Stephen. "I assure you there's no tenderness in the Flying Corps."

"I'm not saying anything against the Flying Corps.

The darlings!" Lady Oakley grew thoughtful for a moment; she adored second lieutenants for their downy youth; their baby mannishness aroused in her an emotion half maternal, half sensuous. "No, they're all right; it's the people at the top, the people who let that fellow Henderson go to Petrograd to hobnob with a gang of anarchists in German pay. I wonder why Labour can't mind its own business and get on with the war. That's all we ask of them. We don't ask them to fight, all those millions of cowards in munition factories. We only ask 'em to get on with their work and take their fifteen pounds a week while the other men are dying for 'em at a shilling a day. All we ask is that they should keep their mouths shut. It isn't much."

Sir Hugh looked up, for Lady Oakley spoke loudly. He joined the group.

"It's all very well, Lena," he said, feeling rather grated, "but Labour isn't a sort of machine worked by a button. Working men have got their own ideas like you and I."

"We don't want any of their ideas. We only want 'em to do their work. When working men get ideas they strike. Fancy striking in the middle of a war like this! But it's always the same thing; if we were to shoot one out of every ten there'd be no strikes."

"Except among those who had to do the shooting," said Stephen suddenly.

"Nonsense," said Lady Oakley. "There are some good men among the Labour Party itself. Look at the seamen, for instance; they've got good leaders in Captain Tupper and Havelock Wilson; they won't stand any pacifist nonsense; they won't carry that traitor Henderson to Stockholm. That's the spirit which made England what she is."

"It's not much to claim," said Sir Hugh, with a bitter little smile. "I shouldn't wonder if you were right, Lena. It's just that spirit of blunt antagonism, the wrong-headedness of people like the seamen, who can't unite with their fellows, who like to belong to the Labour Party and flout the verdict of the majority because it didn't suit them; it's just that anarchistic spirit has made England what she is — a dog kennel with half the dogs snarling and the other half asleep."

"Father," said Stephen, "I think you're a pacifist. Be careful. It'll grow on you. In a few months you'll be like an *Evening News* cartoon, wear a white tie, elastic-sided boots, spectacles, and on the top the mad hatter's feather."

Everybody smiled. All were glad that Stephen took things lightly, but as Lady Oakley led Sir Hugh apart he went rather resentfully. All this talk of reprisals, revenges, forcible prevention of free conferences, these cries for the coercion of individuals, disturbed and offended him. So he was glad when he found that Lady Oakley wanted to talk of a domestic matter.

"Hugh," she said, "do you think we'd better have Mr. March down again next month?"

"Why not? He's rather a nice boy."

"Oh! I've nothing against him. Only — you remember that Sylvia got us to ask him down on his last leave, and I don't say there's anything in it, but this village talks, like all villages. They were about together a good deal, and there's some sort of story."

"What sort of story?"

"Nothing much. Only Westcott tells me that Mrs. Farcet tells her, and so on, that he kissed her in the copse. Somebody saw them."

"Oh! nonsense," said Sir Hugh. "Sylvia wouldn't do

a thing like that. Why! Andy was down only a month ago. Besides, women don't do that sort of thing when their husbands are in France. It's not done."

"I'm not so sure," said Lady Oakley. "Sylvia's a funny girl, and the times are exciting."

Sir Hugh grew acid. "Well, if you really feel that we've got to give in to malignant gossip, let's give in. Don't have him down. I suppose you'll tell Sylvia the reason?"

"Certainly not," said Lady Oakley. "I shall tell her we don't like him, that's all."

"Perfectly absurd," said Sir Hugh. But after his wife had left him he suddenly remembered that frosty January day, the vision of Sylvia driving a young officer in a car. Now he came to think of it, it was a very young man, and he rather thought a fair-haired man. And she had been with him a good deal on his last leave. He supposed it would be all right. Tradition told him that it was natural things should be all right. Then his mind took a leap: supposing it wasn't all right? supposing Jervaulx found out? supposing he shot the pair of them? They did that sort of thing nowadays, and juries let people off. It was the new law: if a man's wife was unfaithful while he served abroad, he wouldn't be convicted for shooting her or her lover — as if a new spirit had got into Englishmen, as if they were growing so used to blood and death that human life was becoming less sacred; as if it was understood that with the spread of barbarism over the world every man should carry his life in his hands. Would this war smash all reserves — break down all sympathies — blunt every shade of feeling? If it went on long enough would it resolve man into his component parts, the tiger and the fox?

XXI

When Sir Hugh arrived at half-past six, Lee met him in the hall, and with an air of sacred gravity told him that Lady Oakley wanted to see him as soon as he came in. He found his wife in her bedroom looking worried, and surrounded by garments which she had obviously pulled out at random. Surprisingly she came up to him and put her arms round him with an air of dependence.

"Oh! Hugh, I'm so glad you've come back. I'd have wired for you if I'd known where you were."

"I've been at the Board all the afternoon. But what's the matter?"

"Westcott's going to have a child."

"Good heavens!" said Sir Hugh as he sat down heavily on the bed. The information amazed him. He liked Westcott, her prettiness and the smile which she always had for him; it was alluring, and Sir Hugh was too innocent to understand that Westcott was not stingy of smiles. Also he looked upon women as remote from passion. It was not the sort of thing he thought about, and so it seemed incredible, this news. "How did it happen?" he asked.

"How am I to tell how it happened?" said Lady Oakley. "Anyhow, it *has* happened."

"Are you quite sure?" asked Sir Hugh, still clinging to his theory of feminine innocence.

"Well, she's owned up, if that's any good. It all came out this afternoon, just after lunch. As I was going out into the plantation I heard a lot of noise in the kitchen. I wouldn't have said anything, but I heard screams. So I went back to the drawing-room and rang the bell, and Marsden came in. She's a silly old thing. She was behaving like a bit of blancmange that isn't feeling well.

All she could say was: ' The hussy ', ' The brazen hussy.' So at last I went into the kitchen, and there was Westcott lying on her back, screaming and kicking."

" Hysterical, I suppose," said Sir Hugh. " Poor girl."

" Yes, she was hysterical. Still I managed to quiet her down after a while, and she owned up. I don't think it would have come out just now if it hadn't been for the inquest. It seems to have upset her. She's been crying all the afternoon, and twice she's had another fit of hysterics, during which she screams: ' He's got black marks on his neck where the fingers went in.' I expect it's preyed on her imagination."

" I'm not surprised," said Sir Hugh; " it's a horrid business. I suppose you haven't seen the details? I bought the *Examiner* at Ashford. As the inquest was yesterday, I expect they'll have the story in full."

Together they read the report of the inquest. The details were few, but painful. It had been held over the body of a Flying Corps officer found in the copse a little way south of Policeman's House. Very little was known of him, except that he was on short leave and had formerly been a jockey. The medical evidence showed that the man had been strangled. There was no clue of any kind. Verdict, murder against a person or some persons unknown.

" Yes," said Sir Hugh, " I suppose it's upset her; but for that we might not have known for a month or two. I wonder who the man was. If we could find him perhaps he'd marry her."

Lady Oakley smiled. " Well, Hugh, it seems unkind to joke about it, but if Westcott were to marry every man we might suspect, she'd have to start a harem."

" Not really! " said Sir Hugh. He was most surprised. He could just imagine that a woman might fall through

love, but the idea of promiscuity was incredible to him. One heard of that sort of thing, but it didn't really happen.

"Yes, really. I've suspected lots of people, Temple, and even Ratby, and oh! any of the boys in the village."

"Have you asked her?"

"Yes. She won't tell. When I ask her she only screams."

"Poor girl," said Sir Hugh. "We must see what we can do for her. Let me see, now I come to think about it, wasn't young Keele fond of her?"

"I think so, but surely you can't expect Keele to marry her after the way she's behaved while he's been out in France?"

"No," said Sir Hugh meditatively. He would have liked to think it possible that Keele should come back, forgive his sweetheart and ennoble their marriage by his forgiveness. It would have been so romantic. "No, I suppose not. Poor Keele! I suppose he knows. I didn't realise. I met him only a quarter of an hour ago as I drove up from the station and stopped to say a few words to him. He seems to be in a queer state. You'd have thought he'd have been full of buck, now he's been mentioned in despatches and has just got a commission."

"Has he?" cried Lady Oakley.

"Yes, didn't you know? It isn't only reckless gallantry, and all that sort of thing, but the fellow's got brains. You should see the villagers round him; they don't know whether to call him 'Alf' or 'Sir.' But he doesn't seem to be enjoying it; he hardly said anything when I asked him how he was getting on, and how he liked it out there. He seemed stunned. I put it down to what he'd been through, but obviously he must have heard about Westcott. That's why he's so upset."

"When did Keele come back?" asked Lady Oakley thoughtfully.

"I don't know. He must have been back a few days."

"I suppose he's staying at Stoat's Farm with his father?"

"Yes. That's only half a mile from Policeman's House. Think of it, Lena! Before he went out I expect he used to meet Westcott in the evening in the very copse where that man was murdered. Poor young fellow!"

Lady Oakley said nothing for a long time. Her mind, sharper than her husband's, worked on the mystery. Then at last she contented herself with only guessing. Was it not better not to know? When these terminations satisfied her sense of justice, and her sense of romance? She was not afraid of Sir Hugh's sagacity. He didn't think about those things. No, indeed, for he said:

"What are we going to do about Westcott? I'm afraid we can't keep her. It would make so much trouble in the village."

"No, we can't keep her," said Lady Oakley. "The poor thing! we must do something. I think I'll go up to town to-morrow and see if we can get her into a home where she'll be properly treated. And then, perhaps, when the baby's been put out to nurse with some decent people, I can find her a situation. I don't think I can have her back, but we must see she's all right."

"Yes," said Sir Hugh. "That's the best thing. We must do all we can."

"I'll just go and see if she's asleep," said Lady Oakley. "I'll tell her that we'll give her the baby linen. That'll cheer her up."

Soon Lady Oakley sat in Westcott's bedroom, while the girl wept and kissed her hand. The older woman

felt moved and sorry for such distress; and from time to time she smoothed the girl's hair, assuring her that everything would be all right.

XXII

"I'M losing my will," thought Monica. She was sitting upon a heap of rugs in the foreman's shanty, knees hunched up, chin in hands. Cottenham had just left her. She wondered what would happen. Her fate, she knew, was not within her government. Perhaps it was not even within the power of his self-control. Perhaps their two destinies had come under the sway of an eternal force. Far away she heard the clang of the palisade door. Gone! After such a little time. Perhaps it was the shortness of the time that made everything between them so urgent and maybe more exquisite. She closed her eyes, recreating the last half hour, and gave herself over to a day dream where fugitive memories struggled to overcome harsh sensations. She remembered things he had said:

"It doesn't look as if the war would last much longer now. You see, now the Reichstag has accepted 'no annexations and indemnities', we ought to move towards peace. Poor Mr. Hughes! He will miss his war."

She smiled in her dreams. When he said that, with the nice ironic smile she liked, he had played with her fingers, one by one. Then later:

"Then you and I — well, just you and I. We'll be free."

Free, yes, free to do what? The sensuous feeling left her for a moment as she remembered their conversation, not a very pleasant one.

"I'll be able to get about then," he said. "Monica, what are you going to do after the war?"

"I don't know. Go back to Knapenden, I suppose."

"You can't do that. We'd lose each other."

She did not reply. If they were not to lose each other, it must be because he prevented it. What could she do? He seemed to feel this.

"We must make a life, you and I. Can't you get free? Wouldn't your people let you come up to town to stay?"

"I don't think so. Father thinks he loves town, but he always goes back to Knapenden after ten days."

"But what shall we do?" said Cottenham. "I want — oh! Monica, don't you see we've got to make a life for each other, you and I, to see each other every day, freely, for a long time, and — " She closed her eyes at the thought. "And give so much to each other that there is nothing more to give."

For a moment she lay sunken in a reverie. She abandoned herself to this dream of the future, though she suspected that it was impossible. He couldn't leave Rochester: she couldn't leave Knapenden. He couldn't marry her. Were they going on like this? And afterwards? Were they going to have stolen meetings in motor cars and woods? No! she knew how racking were those short interviews. Ah! if both lived in London, there would be time and opportunity, and she smiled at the thought of the clandestine which begins in delight and ends in disappointment. But she did not know that. All she knew was that this was a dream. She found it easier to dream than to think. That day her weakness had almost been overcome by his ardour, and indeed it was her weakness rather than her strength that defeated him. She tried to remember the scene, but was conscious

only of the touch of his hands, of the brilliant eyes whose look she could not meet. She remembered a moment.

"How delicate your hands are," he had said, and began twisting her wrist. "One could snap your hand off," he said. "I'd like to do it. I like hurting you. I like pulling your hair and twisting your ears. I like to see you wince as I hurt you, and then feel you soften and expand under a kiss. I'd like to do grotesque things to you, swing you round and round by one ankle and throw you down in a tumbled heap. I'd like to throw you into a pond and haul you out with your hair full of mud and green slime — and cover you then with more ardent caresses because you'd be more mine in the grotesqueness I had created. You're a lovely thing to destroy and spoil."

"Don't," she murmured.

"Don't what?" he asked, taking a sensual mental pleasure in the idea of forcing her to plead.

"Don't frighten me," she whispered.

"What are you frightened of?" he asked.

She did not reply, and he liked to think as he held her with a greater security and a coarser enjoyment that she was afraid of herself. She shrank again as she dreamed. She realised that it was almost impossible they should make a life together. All that he had aroused he had aroused in vain. She had not the liberty to become his slave. But again she found that she could not think of the future. She could not think at all; she simply surrendered to her memories of sensations, the feeling of his crisp hair against her cheek, the scent of Egyptian tobacco in his kisses, the weight and hardness of his embrace.

Cottenham, too, carried with him a sense of doom. As the car whirred along the Maidstone Road, his mind

worked more easily than hers. Manlike, as soon as he escaped from physical sensations he was rid of them, and could think coolly of the condition of his intrigue, or of a business problem, or politics. Things, he knew, were invincibly coming to some solution. Not to a clear solution. Being reluctant to give up anything he wanted, he would not tell himself that conditions were such as to part them. They could not live in the same place; they could not make a common life. Accident might create between them a complete link, and he knew that would be hideous, for they would be tied together by a chain so long that it would part as well as unite them. "Oh!" he thought, "what a mess we're in! If only she were another sort of girl! But she's not a working girl. I can't take her away from her people, and set her up in a cottage outside Chatham. She wouldn't, she couldn't. But then? I say after the war — but what after the war?" He knew that the war was their bond, that nothing could come after the war. It had brought them together; it had not given them to each other, and it could not, unless they were ready to pay the heavy price of Tantalus, of always desiring and fulfilling in occasional half-hours, in precarious security, in places where there was neither comfort nor ease. Complications! Yes, that's what she was bringing him, complications. He thought of Julia. Why couldn't he be content with Julia? He loved Julia, and somehow he knew that he did not love Monica. But yet, he loved Monica because she was difficult, and he did not love Julia, for she was inevitable. Yet, he did not love Monica, for the difficulty of her irritated him, and he loved Julia because she presented no difficulty, put up no dam to the current of his passions. Yet, he loved Monica because the impossibility of owning her made it easy to desire her, and he

did not love Julia, because the certainty of owning her prevented him from desiring.

"I'm sick of it," he said. "I think I'll cut clear of both of them, and go to America." Then he sneered at himself: "And what'll you do in America, you ass? You'll fall in love with somebody, and then with somebody else. Frank, old fellow, you've pitched on a rotten hobby. Why didn't you go in for gardening?"

The sense of doom accentuated itself a fortnight later, when he passed three days in the New Forest, where Julia and the children were spending the summer. Julia was so beautiful, in her linen gowns, nearly always in green, and running through the trees like a wood nymph. She had been delightful, too, because they were alone in a house in the woods. She liked having him alone. She liked to wake up with him, to walk with him in the morning, to see him there at meals, and to watch him playing with the children; in the evening she liked to brood over him, to feel that in another two hours he would be still more alone with her, more hers, that she could look down upon his head on the pillow, and if she liked bend down and caress him as a tigress nuzzles her cub. Cottenham enjoyed this enthralment, for there was in him something feminine that surrendered. As he watched her one afternoon, while she read, he found beauty in the scene; his lovely, assured wife; Lucretia and Diana pursuing each other and screaming, Rupert on his rug making desperate efforts to rise to his feet, and roaring with laughter every time he collapsed on his fat stomach.

"There is the truth of life," he thought. "To enjoy all that is easily graceful. The sight of lovely women, yet not the stress of loving them; pictures and books, yet not the agony of trying to achieve art; little children that come up as flowers. To get older, to get fat, to get

bald, and still to know how to smile." But through his æsthetic quietism pierced the eternal cry of adventurous desire that will not die. "I want Dead Sea fruit," he thought, "and what shall I do if I don't get it?"

XXIII

"BRAUNSTEIN and Zederblum have bolted," said Lady Oakley, looking up from *The Times*.

"Who are they?" said Sir Hugh.

"They like to call themselves Trotsky and Lenine," said Lady Oakley. "Of course they're only German agents paid to stir up trouble for Kerensky. This paper says that it's been proved they took German money. Now they've been found out, and they've bolted. They call it Bolshevism. I call it German gold."

Sir Hugh reflected for a moment. "Well," he said, "I don't see why they shouldn't take German gold. So far as I understand it, they want to upset the Russian government; they want money. Does it matter where they get it from? Besides, I'm not as clear as all that that it's German money."

"Anyhow, it's tainted money," said Lady Oakley. "You don't seem to remember that Kerensky upset the Tsar because the Tsar wanted to make a separate peace. So do these Bolshevists. And it's not the moment when Korniloff and Brusiloff have just been trying to advance, when the papers are full of the letters between the Tsar and the Kaiser, showing that the Tsar has been trying to sell the country all along. Of course, all Russia's sold to the Germans. They've only bought half England as it is, but I suppose they'll get the rest before they've done."

"Lena, I do wish you didn't think everybody was a traitor, and that everybody was bought."

"Well, so they are."

"You say these things without any evidence. I believe Lenine and the other man have been agitating against the Tsar for twenty years. I don't like their politics any more than you do; that's not the same thing as saying they're German agents."

"Everybody who wants to stop the war is a German agent."

"But, good heavens!" cried Sir Hugh, rather angrily, "even the Germans want to stop the war now."

"Of course they do," said Lady Oakley, "now they know they're not going to win it."

Sir Hugh paused for a moment. Yes, there was something in that. This was August, 1917, and for the first two years the German papers had talked of nothing but annexing half Europe. Now the Reichstag had passed a resolution asking for peace without annexations or indemnities. Looked like the devil was sick.

"Yes, I quite agree, but still a fact is a fact. The Germans aren't trying to annex anything now."

"Give them a chance," said Lady Oakley. "It's a trap; that's all; it's a peace trap. You can't believe a word they say. There's only one thing to do: beat 'em. Then we'll talk about no annexations and indemnities."

Sir Hugh did not reply. She was so absolutely right, and yet, she ought to be absolutely wrong. So he went out, and walked across the marsh. Things looked queer just then, and so many illusions were falling. The Mesopotamia Report had come out, and he was still filled with a sense of shocked horror, for his class was shown incompetent, lacking in foresight, lacking in humanity. This picture of high Indian officials and regular officers

neglecting their duty, sheltering behind each other, sickened him. He wondered whether his class was being sentenced. But were other classes better? What was one to believe? Were the business men any better — with their lies to make twopence, and the beastly snobbery that caused them to tumble over one another, pay the expenses of a party, and buy peerages? A depression fell over him. He had been thinking a great deal of the Reichstag resolution; by need or by conversion those people were accepting the principles of the Russian revolution. All this was new, this idea of self-determination; it was a fresh idea to him, old Liberal Unionist, who believed in order and authority. Never before had it struck him that a people should have the right to decide their own form of government. They were born with their government, it had seemed to him, as a man is born with a certain kind of nose. But the idea of liberty was invading him, inflaming him, as it always does Englishmen when it does not interfere with their interests. He brooded for some time over self-determination. Hanging over a stile, he realised that it might lead people to unexpected conclusions. Alsace-Lorraine, for instance. Supposing they voted? They'd vote German. Ten to one they would vote German. They had been German for forty-seven years; the papers said that the whole thing had been gerrymandered, that the French had left the country, that Germans had been settled instead. Very likely! the Germans thought no trick too low; but still there was the fact; the people who lived there would probably vote German. One couldn't give votes to people who left the country forty-seven years before, to people who were dead. He smiled. How angry this would make a French politician! Sir Hugh supposed that the French idea was self-determination for everybody

except Alsace-Lorraine, this being a historical wrong; and our view self-determination for everybody except Ireland, India, and Egypt, these being historical rights. And the Italians believed in self-determination for Poland, but not for the Adriatic coast; and the Germans believed in self-determination, provided everybody voted for them. Contempt surged up in him as suddenly he realised mankind, incapable of desiring justice that is cold, anxious only to seize, and conquer, and crush.

Coming across the marsh he saw a man whom he thought he knew. He wondered what he thought of self-determination. No doubt he, too, wanted to bag half the world. The man drew nearer, came towards him. Then Sir Hugh felt awkward. It was Cradoc. The grocer, too, hesitated, but the footpath inevitably took him to the stile, and there were dykes on the right and left. He did not want to speak to Sir Hugh. He did not want to speak to anybody, for he felt outcast. His shop was still half boycotted, and he would have done no trade at all if Lady Oakley had been able to obtain from Mrs. Martin a more regular service from Rye. But, as he drew nearer, Sir Hugh smiled at him. After all, Cradoc lived on the estate, and he remembered the quiet, earnest little figure who had stood before him at the Tribunal; he respected him, somehow.

"Well," he said, "how are things?"

"Oh! all right," said Cradoc. He respected Sir Hugh. He remembered him as the fairest member of the Tribunal. Only he had nothing to say to him. He felt a class bar.

There was silence for a moment. The real difficulty was not mental but physical: if Cradoc wanted to go on he would have to climb the stile, causing Sir Hugh to get out of his way; he did not want to suggest that the Squire

should get out of his way. Sir Hugh, on the other hand, felt that if he stood back he would be giving a hint to Cradoc that he wanted to get rid of him, and he did not want to do that. So they stood awkwardly where they were, wondering what to do. This compelled conversation, and Sir Hugh was so anxious to say something tactful, that he blurted into the personal:

"I suppose you've had rather a rough time?"

"Oh, no," said Cradoc. "Just the ordinary time one has in prison. Everybody was kind in their way; the chaplain brought me books, any books I liked. The doctor used to talk to me, and when I had to see the governor once, he behaved like a father. That's the horrible part of it. They all mean well, only they've got to do their duty to the system. Everybody meaning well — and they've got to feed you through the nose with a tube. It's like the war: everybody means well, and does evil."

"Oh, I say," replied Sir Hugh, "surely you don't think the Germans mean well?"

"In their way, yes. Just as we do. They're much the same sort of person, led by much the same sort of person. Poor brutes, most of them, workmen, peasants, hauled out to be shot like our workmen and our peasants, led by the junker Crown Prince and the junker Reventlow, just as our poor boys are led by junker Carson, junker Lloyd George, and junker Archbishop of Canterbury."

Sir Hugh thought for a moment. He saw the point. But he thought some men were junker and others more junker. "Well," he said, "I see what you mean, only aren't some of the junkers in the right, and some in the wrong? I don't like war any more than you do, but some wars have to be, and so the people who lead them, in fact the people who provoke them, are doing what they must, not what they like."

Cradoc smiled. "That's what they all say. There never was a war where everybody didn't fight on the defensive. We say that we declared war because Germany declared war on Belgium, France and Russia; Germany says she declared war because they were going to do it to her; Germany says that she had to defend herself against encirclement, which had been going on for years; and we say that we made the Entente Cordiale and the Russian Agreement to prevent Germany from attacking us. We're all pacifists, and we throw declarations of war about like confetti; we all want to get on with our business, and we stop to indulge in war work; we all respect human life, and we prove it by killing twenty million people."

Sir Hugh remained thoughtful for some time. His intellect told him that the man was right. His emotions tried to tell him that Cradoc was wrong. He grew irritable. "But, hang it all! you wouldn't have had us stand out when Belgium was invaded? When we were pledged by treaty to defend that gallant little country?"

"Supposing we had?"

"Then it would have been our turn next."

"Oh! Then that was the reason? It wasn't to protect little Belgium?"

"It's no good chopping logic. The things go together."

"Well, supposing we had been invaded?" said Cradoc.

"You'd have been the first to dislike it, Mr. Cradoc, when the Germans came into Sussex, burning and killing and . . ."

"Would all that have happened if we did not resist?"

"Not resist? But — really this is preposterous. If we didn't resist we should have been annexed."

"Excellent," said Cradoc. "Why not be annexed? Don't you think it would be a good thing if Serbia could

annex the rest of the Balkans and make an end of these little wars? "

"It might," said Sir Hugh, and realised too late that he had walked into a trap.

"Then," said Cradoc, "if Germany were allowed to annex the British Empire that would make an end of one set of wars."

Sir Hugh grew rather angry. He did not like being put into a corner. He remembered that he was arguing with a grocer, and in his petulance this seemed material. Fortunately, he was too well bred to use the fact. Instead, he made snappy reference to our culture and the bestiality of German life and methods.

"Well, let's put it differently," said Cradoc. "Supposing we could annex Germany? We'd give her good government, that is, according to most people."

"Oh," said Sir Hugh, "it's all very well talking, but we're not willing to be annexed and German's not willing; so it's Utopia."

"It's temporary Utopia. When I say annex I'm just exaggerating my point. I mean federate rather than annex."

"We can't federate with Germany."

"We used to say that we couldn't federate with Scotland and Wales, and we did. I think all the world could federate, and will federate, by degrees, as we get rid of the people who want to stop federation, because they have power in their own States, and would have less in the world State; people like kings, diplomatists, generals, noblemen, politicians, financiers. The real people of the world, the working masses, they could federate all right. There's no hostility between a German coal miner and an English tinsmith. The trade unions of the world all want members, of any race or creed, so that they may

work for the good of the world instead of the good of the nation. There's no hostility between men who work, because they work together; there is only hostility between men who prey, because they prey on each other. I say 'Down with the kings! down with the capitalists! down with the landlords!' and then there'll be no obstacles to peace."

They did not speak for some time. Sir Hugh felt that Cradoc was setting forth an idealistic case and doing it badly, but the earnestness of the pale face interested him. Yes, obviously the war was largely a clash of ambitions. Had he not said it himself at the club the other day? Had he not realised England, like Germany, grabbing at colonies, talking of tariffs to bar out people from her markets, shouting that the foreigner must be kept out, and crowing in its press that its own was the finest dunghill. He understood the idea, and suddenly agreed with it, but he was a practical man. "It's all very well. I don't say you're wrong. But how's it going to be done?"

"The people must resume power in all the big countries. They must first get on an even political basis, that is to say, establish republics. They will be bourgeois republics at first. Then the labour parties of the world will more and more control the parliaments. As this happens the capitalist will lose power. As he loses power the cry for new markets will become less, for the labour of the world does not want new markets; it wants to produce goods for its own use, and not goods on which to accumulate profits. When there is no demand for new markets there will be no need for colonial wars to open these new markets. Then nation will want to trade with nation, because some nations make one thing better than another, make it at the price of less effort. You'll find English-

men working iron, while France grows crops, and Germany makes chemicals. Thus, by degrees, each nation will stick to its national business and keep its nose out of other nations' business. Those commercial links will make it necessary for the parliaments to make agreements. The agreements will be complicated, and so there will be occasional parliamentary missions from one country to another, to establish necessary things like common railway systems, common telegraphs, air service; later, common rationing, until they come to common production. As national business grows larger the parliaments will find it necessary to hold occasional joint sittings. Then they will come always to sit jointly, and you'll have the parliament of man."

Sir Hugh stared at him. It amazed him that the little tradesman should have thought all this out. It seemed so moderate, too, so possible if only we cleared away the people who lived by crowns, contracts, diplomatic minutes, cocked hats, flags, epaulets, orders, aiguillettes, all the kickshaws and gimcracks for which men die.

"But," he cried, "it's revolution!"

Cradoc shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know. Evolution if we can. Revolution if we must."

"Mr. Cradoc," said Sir Hugh, at last, "I've never thought of things in this way, and perhaps I'll come to agree with you. Only you're putting all the guilt on the kings, and generals, and the capitalists. What about the people themselves? Are you quite sure that they, too, are not drunk with this desire to carry their flag to the end of the earth? That these workpeople are not as full of hate and ambition as their masters? That they, too, don't want money and power?"

"Some do. Many have been soiled by the old tradition of the rivalry of princes and the loyalty due to them,

and they are run by a press which every day incites them to hate and to grab, and makes them believe that they are better off when they have grabbed, in fact when all they have got is more taxes. But most people are not like that."

"Events contradict you. What about the seamen who have just stopped Mr. Henderson going to Stockholm? They don't seem keen on the international."

"No. They have suffered loss of many comrades sunk by Germans in ships — and they do not yet understand that murder only makes murder; their animal pugnacity is still at the disposal of the people who can profit by it. But they will learn that only love and justice can breed love and justice. There is no stud where the dogs of war give birth to the dove of peace."

"Learn," said Sir Hugh. "In other words we must teach them."

Then, suddenly, he stood back and Cradoc climbed the stile. Sir Hugh had been frightened by this "we" which had sprung from his lips. After Cradoc had vanished round the green, Sir Hugh remained for a long time at the stile. His mind was in ferment. He did not know what he believed yet, but one phrase clung: "Evolution if we can, revolution if we must."

XXIV

Monica was waiting in her sitting room at Castle Hill. Feeling that action would maintain her coolness she was sewing, and as her fingers moved, tried to give shape to her situation. But other things intruded. Though Cottenham was to come to her that night for the first time, she found herself generalising; the evening post had brought her a letter from Miss Moss, in which the

girl asked for a job in the Cottenham Works. Quite simply Miss Moss told her why: "Since Jimmy Quin was killed I've felt that I couldn't stay here any more, only thinking. I must do something. I know you'll laugh at me, for I only met him one week-end, but there it is, I can't help it if you laugh at me."

Monica did not laugh. She sighed as she remembered the dark flushed loveliness of the girl, and Quin's mischief. Killed! One couldn't understand anything so alive being dead. She remembered the thorny crown which they hung upon an oak; a scrap of Quin's Elizabethan lyric came back to her:

> Blight upon the roses, blight in May.
> (Merrily, merrily),
> Mother and daughter of my own decay,
> (Drearily, drearily) . . .

Monica found her eyes full of tears. Must the war spoil them all? Sylvia, and Miss Moss, and young Quin? Sylvia who had lost one husband and seemed unhappy with the second? She, herself, loving and not loving, loved and not loved. As she sat sewing she thought more and more of herself and of the fortnight just elapsed. There had been in those days exquisite moments, for he had been with her for more than three-quarters of an hour; they had passed whole evenings in the shanty in Bull's Field, talking, making love, making plans; they had walked in the country in the clear moonlight and through light showers. There had been many times of doubt, almost of bitterness; she was tired of never hearing him say: "I love you"; he was ashamed of wanting her so much, loving her so little. This tinged their relation with cruelty. But what hurt her most was that such delights as she attained were due to Julia's absence. She

thought: "It was only because his wife was away. If she'd been there he would have been in attendance on her. He'd have to be, of course." But she thought, savagely: "Perhaps he'd want to be." For the first time she acknowledged to herself that she hated Julia, because she possessed the man she wanted, not only legally but by the right of conquering charm. "He's been with me these nights, not because I'd broken into their marriage, but because she couldn't watch him. He was not escaping from her to me, he was escaping from nothing — to nothing."

It was such thoughts had induced her to receive him at Castle Hill. It was dangerous, not only because he might be seen, but because they might find themselves irretrievably linked without being entirely joined. But she felt the need for complete explanations, for an acid test. Through the last weeks he had demanded too much of her, too much emotional abjection, too many surrenders. Yet she knew that she was entirely his, and so she did not resent this: What she did resent was that never had he taken all she would give, that he had tortured her into acquiescence, yet always held back, held himself in control, as if he were afraid of becoming responsible for her. He had said so once: "I daren't become the centre of your life. I'm afraid of not making you as happy as I want you to be. Yes, I know, the thing we love wants to be killed, but its predestined murderer may shrink from the necessary crime."

She started. Outside she could hear the signal, for he did not want to ring and be seen by the landlady. She listened while he whistled two bars of Alceste. "Now," thought Monica, "now's my chance. Let him whistle, and don't go." But she knew that she would go, and still telling herself to keep her door shut she opened it.

Cottenham came in, half elated, half nervous. He was sensitive enough to feel finality in this interview. "To-night," he thought, "it's all or nothing, and whichever it is I'll regret it." So, as much to cheat himself as to put off the irreparable, he seized her in his arms and for a moment caressed her so that he did not realise she resisted him. Only after a moment did Monica put him away:

"No, Frank, don't come near me for a moment. Sit down. Let us talk."

He sat down. His mind wandered to the ugliness of the room. "What a hideous sideboard! and what a cruet!"

"Frank," said Monica, "what d'you want to do?"

"How do you mean? What do I want to do?"

"Well, yes; here we are, we two. Can we go on like this?"

He feinted: "What have I done? What have you got against me?"

"I've got nothing against you that I haven't got against myself. It's not that. But how are things going to end?"

He did not reply. He did not know how things were going to end. Or rather he felt they could not end at all, and he dared not tell her so.

"Tell me," said the girl, "are you sick of me?"

Cottenham gave a little cry of protest, seized her, covered with kisses lips that did not resist, but trembled. For a long time he held her so, and all the old allure rose up and overwhelmed him; she was glad of his embrace, responsive to his contact. She could not think; she could only feel the delight of drawing him closer, of holding him, of finding an assurance which did not feel false. But still, after a moment the question in her mind set itself

once more. She must know, she must know. Her head upon his shoulder, she said:

"You don't love me."

He did not reply. There was enough nobility in him to stop a lie. Indeed he instinctively made for sincerity, though he wrapped it up in phrases.

"Love," he said, "what is love? Who shall say whether we are so different from the beasts? Whether love is not merely the cry of the life force? Why should we assume that love means everlasting attraction? That it means marriage, children, bills? Must one love because of the curve of a lip? Must one love because one has made a fetish of an invisible soul? Oh! Monica, it would be so much easier to lie to you."

"It wouldn't; you're not that sort of man."

"No. I suppose not. Yet I'm not a nice man. I may be an attractive man, but I'm not a nice man. Not loyal, faithful, truthful, decent, kind. I'm nothing of the sort. I'm not a satisfaction; I'm a pleasure."

"You don't love me," said Monica again.

"Well, I've never pretended to. I want you. You play a part in my life that I couldn't cut out. Oh! I suppose I could, just as you could. It would hurt, that's all. But I've never pretended. I've always wanted to make you happy, as much as I could. And I've done you no harm really; I've done you good. When you first met me you weren't alive, you weren't awake, you weren't capable of loving; now your eyes are open, you can let your emotions go. I've made the world vivid to you."

"And what is the good of all that to me?" said Monica.

"I don't know, but I do know it's some good, instead of doddering along to old maidenhood or to dull marriage. I've taught you to feel. All through your life

you'll understand emotion; you'll have sympathy; you won't get old. Getting old is getting hard, and you'll never get hard."

Monica did not reply for a time. Then she said: "Frank, do you understand that you're saying 'good-bye' to me?"

He remained staring at the floor, then said:

"I don't want to; you don't want to. Yet I suppose we're saying good-bye. Things were against us." He turned to go, averting his eyes, and as he turned there rose up in Monica a desolation. She realised herself as marooned upon an island. She cried out:

"Frank! Frank! don't go. I can't let you go." He paused, irresolute upon the threshold; Monica ran up to him, clutching him by the arm:

"Don't go! don't leave me. I can't let you go. I thought I could and I can't. You mean too much to me. You've cut out everything except yourself. You can't leave me like this. I'm ashamed of it, and you're all I've got — oh! don't, oh! don't." She threw both arms round him. "I don't ask for anything. I don't ask you to be responsible for anything. You needn't be decent to me if you don't want to." Her voice thickened with tears. "Only don't send me away. You've conquered me and you can't give me up."

Then her tears grew so heavy that she could speak no more. It was only a minute or two later that she realised the stiffness of the shape she held. He did not free himself, he did not hold her to him. He was passive in her arms, submissive, and she vaguely realised that as she inverted the attitude of woman, as she pleaded instead of eluding, she wearied him, she humiliated him, disgusted him. So horrible was this feeling that she did not resist when he loosened her hands, made her sit down and

dried her tears. He stood a little away from her, and while he spoke she hardly understood him. She stared at him with swollen eyes.

"It's no good, Monica," he said, roughly. "You're right. It can't go on and it can't end. So it must end. It's better for both of us. It would have been too beautiful."

He was gone. Monica sat silent and motionless, her eyes fixed upon the closed door. It had closed upon the past and upon life. She thought of him without anger and without misery. She understood him better. He had wanted her lightly, to be content with a little, and so they had walked into a blind alley. She was prepared to give too much. He had aroused more than he wanted. Was it fair to thrust that upon him? Then she could think no more. She was conscious only of her loneliness, her misery. It could not be. Later only in the night did the tears come again, tears on the stream of which flowed away energy and resentment. For two nights she could not sleep. Her food sickened her. When she went to unit office to give in her notice on the score of ill-health, the foreman said:

"I'm not surprised. You look pretty wonky."

XXV

Sir Hugh walked up and down the big drawing-room. Hands in pockets, head sunken upon shirt front, he was thinking of his interview with the grocer. It still struck him as queer that he should have talked to the grocer. His tradition made it normal for him to discuss local affairs with the farmers, and to pass the time of day with the labourers. If he had talked to Hart or to Port it would have been all right, but somehow the Oakleys didn't

talk to tradesmen. "Times are changing," he thought with a smile, "if the Oakleys are changing." His mind turned to the stormy happenings of the day, the formidable fighting around Arras, in Italy, the rout of the Russians, the fall of Riga, the epic of Kerensky, trying to rally forces sick of war, streaming homewards along the roads, across country, shedding their equipments, their arms, even their supplies, panic-stricken, mutinous, stopping to hold excited meetings which broke into flight as the German batteries advanced and sprayed them with shrapnel. Epic, yes, this attempt of a little sick man to hold together the great Russian ice floe that was melting and cracking under the hot blast of new ideas. "Ideas!" reflected Sir Hugh. "Pobiedonostzeff was right; an idea is more powerful than dynamite. It has power even over me, as if a man could govern anything except his own thoughts. Power over me, a landlord and a capitalist." He smiled. "Am I as bad as all that?" he wondered. "Yes, I suppose there's no denying it; I don't do any real work; I've inherited land, and I sit upon it while other people till it, and I take most of the proceeds. My labourers do their own washing, eat coarse food, bring up half a dozen children on a pound a week, live in houses with stone floors, under roofs which are none too good, drink water from a well that's none too clean, and go on until they're crippled with rheumatism and find their last home in the workhouse, unless I'm good enough to give them a pension of ten shillings a week, while Lena goes round graciously handing out tea to the old women, and bed socks to the old men. Meanwhile I stay in this large house with plenty of clean linen, hot water when I want it, large meals if I'm hungry, delicate ones if I'm sick, and the right to do what I like, not to touch my cap and say 'sir' to any man. And when I'm old they'll take me to

a foreign spa to put me right, so that I may go on eating the meals I like, and giving orders to the people who haven't got land, the people whom I'm blackmailing into giving me most of their earnings, by holding on to the land which they work and on which I prey, blackmailing by telling them to work on *my* land or go and starve."

For a moment Sir Hugh hated himself. Then he had a revulsion. "After all, it's the survival of the fittest. I hold this land because they're too weak or too stupid to take it from me. If they're like that, what right have they to it? But no, that won't do; no wonder they're weak and stupid when for generations my class has hung on to all the things which give men power: education, decent houses, and, above all, security and leisure which give men a chance to think and plan. I've stolen their souls as well as stolen their land. No, not stolen; I haven't the pluck for that. Some old Oakley had the spirit of a brigand, so he took it. He was a worthy man, but I, his heir, haven't his backbone. I live upon the proceeds of those thefts. I am a receiver of stolen goods."

"Hugh," said Lady Oakley, "for heaven's sake don't walk up and down; you get on my nerves."

"Sorry, old girl, I'm feeling rather restless."

"I'm not surprised with things in the state they are. Still, sit down and do something."

Sir Hugh did not reply for a moment, then said:

"I met Cradoc to-day. He's got odd ideas."

"Odd ideas?" said Lady Oakley. "Do you mean to say you spoke to him?"

"I had to, in a way. We both reached a stile at the same time. Still I don't see why I shouldn't speak to him."

"Nonsense. You know perfectly well that one can't have anything to do with a man like that."

"Oh! he's not infectious." But as he spoke Sir Hugh wondered whether Cradoc was not.

"Don't be silly. You know quite well that if we seem to condone his conduct, everybody will. We've got to give the example in the village. That man must not be allowed to forget that he refused to serve his country because he's a coward and shelters himself behind a law made by the weak-kneed for the weak-kneed. He ought to be shot. I'd like to know how many conscientious objectors there'd be if they were shot instead of tucked up in a comfortable jail while other people fight for them."

"Lena, I think you're exaggerating."

"Am I? How?"

"You seem to think there's no such thing as conscience. Oh! yes, yes, I know," he went on impatiently, as Lady Oakley opened her mouth to reply, "you'll say that no man's conscience could bid him keep out of the war, but I tell you that a man's conscience may bid him anything. You mayn't like it, but there it is, and if he's honest . . ."

"Honest!"

"Yes, honest; if he's honest we must either respect his conscience or we must adopt the brutal disregard of fine feeling which people say we're fighting against when we fight the Germans. I'm not so sure that these conscientious objectors are as black as they are painted. It's not so nice as all that going to prison when one might squirm out of it by making munitions or going on the land. Do you know that over three hundred people, men and women, have just handed in a petition to be allowed to take the place of conscientious objectors in gaol — like the hundred and sixty-four Quakers who offered themselves in 1659 as substitutes for political prisoners. I think it's beautiful."

"Hugh!" cried Lady Oakley, "one might think you agreed with them."

"I don't and I do. I'm not so sure as I was that this war is a struggle between democracy in England and autocracy in Germany. I'm not so sure that the real struggle is not between the German junker and capitalist on one side, and the empire builder on this side. It may be that there wouldn't have been a war if we hadn't grabbed half the world and claimed the other half. I'm no friend of German imperialism, but I'm not so sure as I was of British imperialism. This desire to expand, to get new markets, to build fantastic railways, and to hold on to everything, and blackmail everybody else by means of tariffs — it looks uncommonly like the origin of all war."

"Berlin-Baghdad," said Lady Oakley.

"Yes, Berlin-Baghdad; there's a ridiculous idea for which to go and kill people. Are we any better? I seem to have heard of a thing called Cape to Cairo. Tell me, please, what the difference is? Does it amount to saying that a scheme is clean if we run it, and unclean if others run it?"

"How can you talk such nonsense? Everybody knows that the German in his colonies behaves like a wild beast, that the natives hate him, that it's our duty to bring good government . . ."

"Lena, that's cant. Natives hate all white men. They stand some sorts better than others. All white men sweat black men. Of course, the Germans in the colonies have murdered, and outraged, and burned, but didn't the Belgians flog and torture in the Congo? Didn't we wipe out the Matabeles in South Africa? Didn't the French wipe the natives out in Dahomey? Haven't we killed the Pacific native with gin? Didn't we fight the

Chinese to force them to buy opium? This talk of duty makes me sick. This hypocrisy. Let us talk of profits for our traders and soft jobs for our sons in the Colonial Civil Service, that's straight; but don't let's talk of the white man's burden, let's talk of the white man's booty. They hate us; all India and half Egypt only stick us because we've got the machine guns. Us! Who are we? The ruling class, of course. What does all this power, this empire, mean to the working class?"

"It's got nothing to do with them," said Lady Oakley. "They've got no education; it's for us to lead them and to see they do their part in the empire. The working class is getting beyond itself. Think that in a war like this the engineers should be striking! If we were to shoot one out of every ten . . ."

"Shoot! that seems to be the only argument our class has got. Force, and more force, never reasoning, never listening to the other side. Besides, it's all very well this talk of shooting working men, and it may be justified, but if we start doing that sort of thing we'll have to apply the method to everybody."

"So one should in war time."

"Oh! should one? I don't think you'd agree, Lena, when it came to it. You sit there talking of shooting the strikers, and you're ready to breed suspicion and hate by treating the employers in quite a different way. I see something of that on the Board. When we offer a contractor work and he says that the Government price is too low, and he won't do it, do we shoot him? When we examine his costs and find that the poor fellow can only make seven per cent. and still he won't do the work, do we shoot him? When he's doing some work for us, and gives us notice because he isn't making enough, in other words, strikes — yes, strikes — strikes because he says

the profit doesn't enable him to live decently, just as the workman strikes because he says the wages don't allow him to live decently, do we shoot the employer? No, we stop his mouth with a peerage."

"Well, I didn't back him up," said Lady Oakley. "I didn't say men should make fortunes out of the war."

"They *are* making fortunes. The country's rotten with profiteering, and we can't stop it. We fix wages, and most of the time the workman's got to accept the rate or starve; but if we fix prices and the profiteer withholds the goods, which is just the same thing as a workman withholding his labour, we talk of calling up the workman and making him hand over his labour under the bayonet; we aren't so ready to make the profiteer hand over the goods which he is blackmailing the community into buying at a higher rate. And if he does hand over his goods, we let him take the higher price for all the old stock he bought at low prices, for all the stuff he bought before the war. Profits are sacred, men are not."

Lady Oakley did not reply for some time. Then she said, more gently:

"I don't know what's come over you. I wish you weren't so excited." She went up to him and put her hand on his arm. "Don't let's quarrel over things that don't matter — I mean to us, that's to say, between us."

Sir Hugh looked at his wife tenderly, sorrowfully. Yes, indeed, he did not know what had come over him. Why should this handsome, imperious woman, who had once held such sway over him, become every day more strange? Was it because she could not leave her class, while every day it seemed to be leaving him?

XXVI

Sir Hugh and Louise settled Stephen into the compartment. Though his son had almost recovered from shell-shock, excepting his sombre humour, he had only just begun to walk again, and would always be lame. It hurt the father to have to assist this vigorous young man up the steps of the carriage. But it pleased him to see Louise tend him, place a pillow under his elbow, and skilfully raise the injured limb so as to make a sort of bolster under the knee.

"There," she said. "Now you'll be quite comfortable. It was worth driving into Hastings. You won't have to move till London, instead of having to change at Ashford."

"Thanks, old thing. And, I say, you might let out old Toss when you get back. I'm afraid I locked him up in the gun room. He went to sleep and I forgot him. And since you're in Hastings, perhaps you wouldn't mind dropping at the bookseller's at the back of the Queen's, and asking him whether he's waiting for the war to stop before he sends me that book on foreign exchanges. And if anybody tries to sell you any matches, buy 'em."

"Righto," said Louise, smiling as she closed the door. All were pleased in their way with this dependence. As the train pulled out, Stephen seemed to be thinking of it. "Dear old Louise," he murmured, "I'd have had a thin time of it these six months if it hadn't been for her."

"She's a dear girl," said Sir Hugh, and for a moment sank into a dream of the dead Mrs. Douglas, who had not known how to love him. He wished Douglas would die. He didn't like him. Then he could practically adopt Louise. But he remembered that Stephen must not be allowed to brood, and talked of the journey to London,

of the marriage of Genevieve, of the fun it would be for Stephen to lunch once more out of his own house. The object of the trip was not to meet the Cawstons, but to give Stephen a change, and Sir Hugh innocently thought that Stephen did not know it. So the father went on chattering until, short of small talk, he suddenly asked the young man: "You're pulling round, Stephen, old chap. Have you thought at all of what you'll do next?"

"You mean what they call a career, don't you?"

"Yes. It's rather awkward your not having taken your degree. Any idea of going back to the 'Varsity to finish? They're making it easy for wounded officers, you know, giving them pass degrees if they go up for say six or twelve months. Hard lines, in a way; considering you might have taken a first."

"Oh!" said Stephen, "doesn't matter. Unless you're dead keen on it, father, I'd as soon not go back. It's too late. I'd feel out of it at school; that's all the 'Varsity is. At least that's what it would feel like now after being out there and seeing . . ."

"Yes, I know," said Sir Hugh hurriedly, "we don't want to talk about that. Only if you don't go back you'll find it rather hard to do any good in the diplomatic."

"I'm not so struck with the diplomatic. Seems to me a rather dirty game. We used to be told that a diplomat is a fellow who lies abroad for the good of his country. Seems to me he hasn't been doing so much good as all that. Don't know that I want to join the people who have made a corner in snaky finesse. The status is changing, too; the popular idea seems to be that a diplomat is either a damn fool or a damn blackguard. They'll be getting it in the neck from the Labour Party soon, and judging from the mess they've made, it mightn't be a bad idea to recruit our diplomats from the boiler makers and waitresses.

Sir Hugh smiled. "Well, you may be right. Only it's going to make a mess of your career, this attitude of yours. It's true this war's upset everybody's career."

"Yes, it's made a mess of some and pushed up others. Same old total in a hundred years. Fellows have gone out, leaving their jobs, and the unfit, and the Cuthberts, and the men of forty-one have bagged them. I suppose it's all right; in a way one wants some to do the fighting, and some to collar the swag and be patriotic. One can be the hell of a patriot when one's over forty-one. Age makes patriotism safe."

"Don't be rude to your poor old father," said Sir Hugh, laughing. "It's not his fault he was born before you were."

"I don't mean you," said Stephen. "I mean those swine in office, like Uncle Angus. Still, what's the good of talking? Since you're not shoving me, I rather think I'd like to go into the Bank. You could squeeze me on to a high stool?"

"Yes," said Sir Hugh, "if you think you'd like it."

Then they talked of finance nearly all the way to town, and Sir Hugh was surprised at the maturity of his son. As if the war were a forcing house. He had read up foreign exchange, and had ideas about the funding of the debt that staggered the old financier. He supposed that an expenditure now risen to over six millions a day needed new finance. Still, they had a warm difference of opinion on automatic conversion of short loans, and Stephen was lifted on to the platform at Victoria volubly protesting that the Government ought to bear consols so as to bring the price down and buy back its own stock dirt cheap.

It was altogether a bright day. Stephen was whirled, "to take his mind off it", to the tailor, whirled to the

Army and Navy Stores to buy tobacco, whirled to Hatchard's, to Holland's. So he was prepared to be pleased at lunch, at Angus Cawston's flat in Ashley Gardens. Indeed he flirted a good deal with Genevieve, obviously attracted by her straw blondness. Meanwhile, Cawston talked. He talked more than ever, and more securely, for now he was no longer a director in the Drug Control Office, but following on obscure revolutions, brought about by backbiting other directors, scheming to steal their work, enlarging his own staff regardless of any need, he had been recognised as a man full of push and go. That is, he had pushed, and the others had gone. So he was Controller.

"Yes," he said, "things are going pretty well. We're extending the controls. Got to, you know. When you start controlling a drug, the trade puts up a substitute. Then you've got to control the substitute. Then somebody, probably a Hun who calls himself a Swiss, thinks of a sub-substitute. You control that. And so on. There's such a rush on drugs that by the time the war's done I guess you won't be able to buy a liver pill without my ticket."

"Excuse daddy," said Genevieve. "He's got so coarse since he started controlling."

"My dear girl, there's a war on. Put that in your maidenly pipe and smoke it. Besides, it's no good your talking; you'll soon be married, and when Drayton comes home the conversation at the conjugal hearth will centre round ipecacuanha and atropine, with the mysteries of cocaine dens thrown in to liven things up."

"Oh, yes," said Sir Hugh, "I forgot to congratulate you."

Cawston explained: "Yes, Drayton's a good chap. Junior partner in Drayton and Boho, biggest wholesale

chemists in the country. They've done well out of this war, those people. Still, I suppose they're making amends."

Everybody laughed.

"There's a romance for you, Genevieve," said Stephen. "The profiteer, like a conquering prince, marries the daughter of the conquered prince, otherwise known as the Controller. I can see the poetic caption in the *Daily Mirror* with your names under incredible photographs: Magnesia King Weds Magnesia Control, or: Controller's Daughter to Operate on the Home Front."

"Don't be silly," said the girl sharply, her rather foolish little mouth tightening. She was sensitive about Drayton and Boho. After all, in a way, they were in trade, and though she liked Drayton she might not have married him if the firm had not managed to build three factories out of excess profits, and convinced the Inland Revenue that there were no excess profits to tax. So Cawston dropped the subject, while Sir Hugh reflected that indeed times were changing; not long ago no Oakley, and hardly a Cawston, could have marrried a Drayton and Boho, because they would not have met one. This harmonised with Cawston's conversation; he was talking of men made by the war.

"Regular turn-over," he said. "There's no talk of class now, and a jolly good thing too. We had to get business men in to win the war."

"We aren't winning it very fast," said Sir Hugh.

"Give 'em time; they aren't a bad crowd, really. Look at Geddes; the papers say he was a railway porter once. Now he's controller of the navy. There's lots of others, too, less high up; one of my directors was a clerk in a gas-stove firm; they're all over the Civil Service, provision dealers, pawnbrokers, all sorts of men who are

saving the country millions a week. Seems a pity the old families should have to go. Still, there you are." He heaved a fat, philosophic sigh. "It's the wheel of fortune, as Tennyson says, lowering the proud."

There was silence for a moment. Everybody was thinking of the dead ruling class, agreeing that it had shown itself unworthy to rule, and yet, except perhaps Cawston, rather afraid of the new ruling class. The old class wanted power, the new class wanted power and money. The old class had played the game and lost it; the new class had made it pay. So Sir Hugh asked how Hubert was doing.

"He's all right," said Cawston. "We've had a letter from him at last. It seems the Huns are being quite decent to him. They are, you know, in the Flying Corps. He writes that three other English flying men and himself dined at the German mess the other night; he says they did themselves very well. One thing they're not short of is fizz. So he's merry as a cricket; he's sent me a cheque to buy Jinney a wedding present because he's afraid he won't get to Berlin in time to buy it before the wedding."

From Hubert the talk wandered to the war; the older men discussed the newspaper maps, the collapse of Roumania and the Cambrai disappointment.

"Nasty mess," said Cawston. "Some general will get rapped over the knuckles for it. Seems to me he's thrown away our chance with the tanks by trotting 'em out before we had enough of 'em. We ought to have waited till we had thousands; then we'd have rushed the whole line. If I'd been the general at Cambrai, I'd feel like shooting myself."

"Oh! no, you wouldn't," said Stephen. "Englishmen don't do those things. If you were a Russian general you

might. The Russian general who's beaten always commits suicide. A British general goes to live in Earl's Court."

The talk wandered off to the part the Americans would play, and Cawston displayed vast knowledge as to the numbers landed in France. Then Genevieve took Stephen aside to show him photographs of herself in many attitudes and military costumes. So Cawston lowered his voice and said to Sir Hugh: "By the way, I ran across Sylvia the other day. At the Petticoat Lane Fair at Albert Hall. She was going strong."

Sir Hugh did not reply for a moment. He did not like this way of putting it. He felt it implied something. So, with some hesitation and assumed negligence, he said: "Oh! was she with a party?"

"No. She had a nice looking young soldier with her. A fellow called March."

Sir Hugh's mouth grew rigid: "Angus," he said, "d'you mind my asking you whether — well, is there any talk going round?"

Cawston made a broad gesture. "My dear fellow! there's always talk about a pretty woman."

"I want to know."

"Oh! well, if you insist, I should say she's been seen rather too often with him. He seems to get leave easily. Of course it doesn't matter in war time."

"No," said Sir Hugh, "it doesn't matter — if it doesn't matter."

XXVII

"Molly," said Hart, as the girl put on her cloak, "where are you going to?"

"Just going for a run around. It's a fine night."

"Going alone?"

"Oh! well, you never know."

"Look here," said the big farmer, standing up. "Are you going to meet that conscientious swine, or ain't you? Out with it."

Molly raised her chestnut head very high. "I shall please myself," she said.

"Oh!" said Hart, "will you? Thinking of becoming Mrs. White Feather?"

"What if I do?" said the girl aggressively. "Happen to have a husband handy for me?"

"Oh!" said Hart. He had no answer ready. "So that's it. Putting up with what you can get."

"I'm not putting up with anybody," snarled Molly. "If I'm single, it's because I like it, and now perhaps I'm tired of it. Cheero, good evening."

The farmer sat down, and as he filled his pipe reflected that there was something in Molly's point of view. Of course, she wanted to get married. He thought of consulting his wife, but Mrs. Hart went on mending his breeches with an air of complete aloofness. "I'll rive the guts out of her," he remarked, but without conviction.

As Molly went along the lane she realised that her father's attitude forced her decision. She had been hesitating for two or three weeks. Once she had seen Cradoc in the distance, and turned back when he came towards her. Then she had spoken to him twice, about the weather. As the man was polite and cold, her pride had fired, and vaguely there had formed in her mind a desire to bring him to her feet. She didn't mean anything, of course, but she did not like to think that he took it so easily. As he attempted no further approach, she had that morning told him casually that if it was a fine moonlit night she'd be taking a walk past Policeman's House. Now she sped along the road, a new thrill of

excitement in her breast. It did not strike her that he would not be there, so the sight of his figure, dark against the white road, seemed natural. For a moment they walked side by side. When at last he spoke she was surprised. She expected a loverlike speech, and actually Cradoc had been thinking of something else. He said: "It's a funny world. Have you seen the posters outside the King's Arms?"

"No. What about them?"

"They're asking us to pray for victory. And they're backing it up with a message from General Robertson saying that it is only when the whole empire unites in prayer as well as in work that we can look forward to a successful conclusion — and all that. Admiral Beatty, too. He says that when Englishmen can look out on the future with humbler eyes and a prayer on our lips, then we can begin to count the days to the end. Lovely idea! I wonder whether Beatty really thinks a prayer works better than a fifteen-inch shell."

"I don't know," said Molly. "Let's stop. I've kicked a stone and hurt my toe."

They stopped on the road, face to face, and awkward. Cradoc stared at her, half cold. Her good looks still affected him, her broad squareness, her milk-white skin, and the tangled brown hair. But she had failed him once. And a vague hatred mingled with his desire.

"Isn't there anywhere where we can sit down?" asked Molly. "Let's go in these and see if we can find a log."

Silently they went into Dead Man's Copse, as it was called since the strangled airman had been found there. They were young enough not to care. For a long time they sat together on a heap of hurdles, the girl instinctively silent and alluring. She sat relaxed, very white under the blazing moon, and Cradoc wanted to touch her,

realised that he might, yet wondered whether he should give way to a purely physical desire, which intellectual asceticism made contemptible. Then she turned towards him. She was rather angry because he did not advance.

"Well?" she said, "lost your tongue?"

"I don't know what to say, Molly. It's good to be with you again."

"Doesn't seem to be much fun for you." He did not reply, and she went on. "Why are you sulking? Because of what I said?"

"Oh! no. It was natural enough. You couldn't go on loving a man who wouldn't do as others did."

After a long pause Molly said: "I dunno. Seems to me all that's too deep for a girl. Still it's just as you like."

Cradoc realised that she was offering herself, but his pride was so sore that he wanted to humiliate her. So, harshly, he replied:

"Yes. Have you nothing else to say?"

She flung him a glance of hatred and half admiration. "Want me to eat dirt, do you? I will if you like. I'm not particular. So you can have it straight: if you want to let bygones be bygones, and go on as we were, I don't mind."

Cradoc hesitated for a moment, then put his arm about the broad shoulders and drew the girl to him. The old intoxication rose in him as he clasped her, but now he held her with a sort of royalty. In a way he had not suffered in vain, for he was her master, not her slave. He raised her square white chin, kissed her lips, full of exquisite condescension.

XXVIII

Savagery seemed once more to have crept into Stephen. The dull silence which had often turned into light ironic humour had half returned, and now he brooded again, breaking off his secret meditations only to indulge in fits of anger. It did not occur to anybody that he was different since Louise had given up nursing him, and returned to the New Hospital, nor was it noticed that he grew lighter when she came to Knapenden. This was not infrequent, for she had given up nursing, and was now assistant secretary at the hospital; thus she could come over two or three afternoons a week to assist in Stephen's convalescence by amusing him. His eyesight had not suffered from shell-shock, yet reading tired him, and so Louise took to reading aloud to him. She expressed herself ideally, for she began by bringing her own literature, novels by Mr. E. F. Benson, essays by Mr. E. V. Lucas, and when Stephen preferred other books she said: 'Just as you like,' and patiently sitting by his side, endlessly read him Hartley Withers on finance, and without any apparent repulsion sundry works of Mr. E. D. Morel.

Stephen took a double pleasure in this. The stuff interested him, was, he felt, building him, and at the same time he liked the soothing low voice, the fine-cut profile, the shadow of the black lashes, and the tender mouth. Sometimes, at the end of a chapter, she looked up and smiled, a soft, veiled smile, and life felt easy. He dilated, as a parched flower under gentle rain. Once he said:

"Louise, you make hatred incredible. You sit there like a great fat water lily, whitely basking in a shady pool, and you make the water greener."

"I'm not fat," said Louise, pouting.

"Sorry. Let us say capacious, spacious; a spacious soul, that's you, with room in it for all the love in the world. And as all the love of the world crowds it there's no room in it for hate."

She smiled, and taking up the book again, began to read.

Sometimes they played billiards. Stephen had got over the annoyance of the long journey round the table which his short leg imposed on him, and he no longer struggled to set the balls in place, or to get them out of their pockets. He liked to be waited upon by Louise, for it was not like being waited upon: it was more like being with somebody in the company of whom everything turned out all right. She was much better than he, and could give him easily twenty points in the hundred. This hurt his vanity, and now and then they quarrelled amicably, he charging her with foul play, she with a baby's petulance. It was familiar, full of comradeship, and here, too, he was unconsciously pleased by the lines of her rather full figure as she stooped over the table. She contented him. He grew aware of it once, suddenly. They had interrupted their game to talk, that is, for Louise to listen as usual while Stephen expressed his vigorous contempt for squire, manufacturer and labour man:

"They say that the Italians broke at Caporetto because of socialist propaganda. Lies and lies. It makes one sick. Why can't people say simply that men run because they're frightened? What's the hope for the future? In capitalists who want to grab all the money in the world? In labour men who want to grab the capitalists' money? In landowners who want to hold on to everything they've got? My God! Henry James is right: Cats and monkeys, monkeys and cats, the whole of life

is there. And they talk of humanity! Humanity's the only thing that doesn't deserve it. One understands St. Paul praying for Judgment Day so that this race might be cleaned off the world, and leaving it to the tiger and the wolf whose blood-thirst is only hunger, while man's blood-thirst is a hobby. So much the better, perhaps: in the next war he may learn to kill more and to kill 'em quicker."

Louise raised soft eyes to him: "What dreadful things you say, Stephen. Still, I somehow understand why you feel them."

He looked at her for a moment, then, putting his hand on her shoulder, said: "Dear old Louise," and bending, kissed her on the cheek, gently at first as a brother, but long, as a lover. She did not withdraw, and hoarsely he murmured: "Sweet Louise."

Also he had again taken to riding with his father on the upper downs. A need for activity had invaded him, and he was with difficulty prevented from turning up at the meet of the East Sussex hunt.

"Why shouldn't I hunt? Sir Richard Calmady hunted, and he had still less legs than I."

But the idea of a possible toss was terrifying, and so Sir Hugh snatched all the time he could from the Board of Control to take his son across the smoother downs. Stephen talked more to Sir Hugh than to other people; he found him sympathetic to his anti-militarism, which was a reaction rather than a theory. When they walked their horses, Stephen liked to make long catalogues, the international gallows he called them, on which he was prepared to hang Mr. Leo Maxse, Baron Sonnino, Tirpitz, Colonel Will Thorne, General Korniloff. By degrees he extended his gallows to a capacity of a couple of hundred necklaces. "I say hang 'em," he said. "Don't shoot

'em: we've got to get out of the habit of making ammunition. Father, do you know, the very sight of khaki makes me ill."

Sir Hugh laughed, and tried to quiet him, but so much vibrated in him in sympathy that he seldom stopped his son. Also Stephen was difficult to stop. He was growing sure that the military mind is an inferior mind.

"Everybody talks about the genius of Haig and Mackensen, and makes out that Hindenburg is the hell of an intellectual bug — and what's it amount to? Working out transport calculations which a railway clerk on the London and Brighton could do in his head, except that he'd lose less luggage; and seeing that the men get their rations with an unpunctuality which would make Joseph Lyons ashamed; and pounding a place to bits and telling men to go and sit in it, and shouting: 'Come on, you fellows!' like a butcher shouts 'Buy my pretty meat.' You should see 'em at work, our brass hats. I remember once, and I could tell you ten stories like it, we could see a German battery from the O. Pip that was shelling us on the left. So I rang up and asked if we could put down a few rounds. 'Can't be done,' said a voice. I asked why. 'Because it's not in your sector; it's a job for Group Q.' 'But,' I said, 'Group Q can't see the battery as we can; there's rising ground between them.' 'Can't be helped,' said the voice. Then I realised that the creature at the other end must either be senile or a major-general, and I started 'sirring' him for all I was worth. But it was no good. We didn't put down a single shell, and when the Hun battery had done its damndest, it moved off somewhere else. Then, ah! then Group Q had got its chits through, and started shelling the place where the Hun had been sitting, oh! like billy-oh."

"Did you ever meet your friend?" asked Sir Hugh, smiling.

"Yes. I went up to Divisional H. Q. a few days later, and I met him. It was a dear old thing entirely plastered with ribbons which he'd won at the front, including a few which he'd won at the back. We had a few words in a respectful 'beg your pardon' sort of way. But he held the honest views of the simple soldier, who never asked the reason why and had neither done nor died. 'No poachin', young fellow; when you've lived as long as I have you'll know it won't do to pinch another man's bird. No poachin'. It's the same for Huns as for pheasants.' Then he let out his Sam Browne. And that's the stuff, father, that's England's gory glory. The day those people are up against civilians, they won't crumble, oh! no, but the row will be over before they've found out what it's about, and they'll be sitting in a cell at Wormwood Scrubbs wondering why the batman doesn't come when they ring the bell."

Sometimes they talked generally. Sir Hugh's sense of consistency was shocked when, early in November, the Bolsheviks suddenly declared the German pretensions inordinate and prepared to fight: the press at once dropped the German agent stunt, forgot all about Braunstein and Zederblum, and grew quite enthusiastic over *Mr.* Lenine and *Mr.* Trotsky. Thus, when at the end of the month the Lansdowne letter came out, Sir Hugh felt that somebody had at last expressed him. . . . He couldn't swallow Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, any more than he could swallow the patriotism of Miss Christabel Pankhurst. They were too rowdy for him, but Lord Lansdowne, so guarded in his proposals to negotiate, so animated by moderation, formulated what Sir Hugh had only glimpsed: that his class, which he still loved, must

fall before anarchy if peace was not soon made. He was so enraged when the newspapers described Lord Lansdowne as an old man in decay that he wrote a furious letter to the *Times*, which did not print it, pointing out that Mr. Clemenceau was still older, and in his view much more decayed. He also wrote a letter to Lord Lansdowne himself, expressing his approval and put himself down as a member of any organisation embodying his views.

Stephen gave him no sympathy: "They're all the same," he said. "Tories and Radicals. They all hate the other side instead of loving their own. I suppose I'm going into politics; they give an opportunity to rancour, and I suppose I'll go on the democratic side because I'm fed up with the old side, but I'll never pull it off with people who wear white ties or india-rubber collars. It'll be the same as it was out there. We were all T. G's, and we tried to carry on with the N. E. T's, but it was no good."

"T. G., temporary gentleman, I know that," said Sir Hugh, "but what's an N. E. T.?"

"Oh, Not Even That. How those fellows hated us! They couldn't get the hang of the talk; they used to call us old dear when they meant old bean, and that sort of thing. Looked upon us as a lot of Eton and Oxford snobs, and clustered among themselves, and wished they could get their pips off. Talk of mixing the classes! You can do it, but it's like mixing port and ginger ale; makes a rotten drink."

Lady Oakley found Stephen very trying. She knew she must not encourage him to think about the war, but she could not find anything else to talk about, and she did not like his attitude. He might be ill, but his conversation sounded seditious. One morning they had a

real quarrel. Lady Oakley was looking at the war map, and asked Stephen where Paschendaele was.

"Oh," said Stephen, "that's not a place; it's a novel by Elinor Glyn."

Lady Oakley flushed. "I wish you wouldn't treat me as though I were a fool. You seem to think this war's funny."

"Well, it has its humour," said Stephen, who felt rather ashamed of his joke.

"You've a queer sense of humour. Apparently you can read the newspapers, which are fuller and fuller of atrocities, and think that humorous."

"Atrocities," said Stephen. "Yes, I've noticed ever since Lansdowne wrote that letter the papers have been pumping up atrocities for all they're worth. Keep up the hate. God save us from peace."

"There must be no peace," said Lady Oakley, "until we've won. We shall never sheathe the sword . . ." She stopped, remembering that these were the words of Mr. Asquith, whose name she did not care to mention. "Anyhow it is our duty to make an end of German militarism. We must see to it that they are made powerless to intrigue and organise against us again. Never more must they have a colony from which to raise black armies, or to start submarine bases. I suppose Lord Lansdowne wants to give them back. Well, they shan't be given back. Our own colonies wouldn't allow it, for one thing."

Stephen laughed. "Oh, mother, it's a pity women can't stand for Parliament; you'd be a terrific success under the National Party label."

"Yes, I've joined the National Party, and why not? They're the only people who are going to do anything, close our markets to dumped German goods, make 'em

pay, and keep the Hun out. What have you got against the National Party, I'd like to know?"

"Oh, nothing, every play needs its sanguinary part, only father and I are pals of Lansdowne."

"What d'you mean?"

"Yes," said Sir Hugh suddenly. "I agree with Lansdowne, and I've written to tell him so."

The hot angry flush rose again in Lady Oakley's cheeks.

"Oh," she said. "Then, Hugh, I wish you luck with your associates."

She left the room and they did not speak again that day. Even at meals Lady Oakley would not open her mouth.

"Been a bit of a rumpus," said Lee to Mrs. Marsden. "Politics, I gather. That's what it'll be like if the women get the vote."

"I quite agree with you," said Mrs. Marsden. "Nasty, unsexed creatures."

XXIX

Dinner that night was a silent meal. Sir Hugh had returned from Ashford only just in time to dress. Lady Oakley looked rigid, while Sir Hugh ate what was put before him and seemed surprised when it disappeared from his plate. Monica was not present, and nobody enquired about her, for Stephen, responding to his parents' mood, said hardly anything. At last, when Lady Oakley rose, she said:

"Don't be too long over your port, Hugh," and went out.

After a moment Stephen put down his glass and said:

"The mater's rather hipped. Too much temperament.

Goes up and down like a dear old barometer in April. Suppose it's my fault; she came and sat down with me this afternoon prepared to shed an atmosphere of love and peace, but by the time she'd told me how many girls she'd collared for the land and for the W. A. A. C.'s I was getting ready to bristle. She tried to get me to join the National Party, the latest stunt: thumbs up for the British, thumbs down for the Hun."

"Yes," said Sir Hugh, thinking of something else.

"Well, I'm no pal of the Hun, but somehow I feel like poor old Ball, who was sorry when he potted them. I've just been reading his book. Of course, he was one of the best, but I do wish they'd give Captain Ball, V. C., a rest. He did his bit, and he did it damn well, and that's all there is to it. Makes one sick, this hero-worship; when people talk to me about my blessed leg I feel they're pulling it. If I hadn't been laid out I shouldn't be a hero, and Ball wouldn't be a hero if he hadn't crashed. In peace time one can't be a hero just because there's no chance of stopping one, but in war time people like me and others, who do their bit because it's the thing, get gushed over something sickening. Mother tried to make me play a little game: make a list of the ten greatest men living. Started with Lloyd George, rolled over my timid suggestion that it wasn't fair to leave out George R. Sims, and stuck in poor old Ball. Some people would call that single-mindedness. I call it monomania."

There was a silence. Then Stephen bent towards his father and said gently: "I say, I know it's jolly hard lines, but it'll pan out all right. Trust Sylvia always to come down butter-side up."

"Sylvia?" said Sir Hugh. "What d'you mean? What about Sylvia?"

The young man started. "Oh! sorry. I saw you were down in the mouth. I thought you knew."

"Knew what?" said Sir Hugh, now excited.

"Oh, well, it's not for me to talk about it. The mater'll do that. Been a bit of a row with Andy, I think. Shouldn't have said anything about it," he added, with unusual tenderness in his voice, "only you seem to have the pip."

"Where's Monica?" asked Sir Hugh.

"Upstairs with Sylvia."

"Oh," said Sir Hugh. "H'm, I think I'll have a word with your mother." He went into the drawing-room, where Lady Oakley was reading a novel, turning over the pages very fast.

"What's this I hear about Sylvia?"

"She's come back. Andy's found out."

"Found out what?"

Lady Oakley jumped to her feet. "Oh, Hugh, how can you be so dense? I gave you a hint nearly six months ago. Don't you remember I told you we'd better not ask Mr. March down? But you never remember anything."

"March, March! But then . . ." Sir Hugh shrank from sudden understanding; incidents connected themselves: that conversation with his wife, what Angus Cawston had told him, the glimpse of Sylvia in the car last January. This was horrible. No, it couldn't be true. But it must be true. Here were details.

"She's in an awful state," said Lady Oakley. "She ran down this afternoon and it was all I could do to prevent her from blurting it out before the servants. Monica and I have been watching to keep her in her bedroom."

"Are you sure there's no mistake?"

"Of course there's no mistake. It's no use pretending between ourselves. It's been going on for months, and I expect half London's talking about them. Really, Sylvia's too big a fool. She didn't even travel by a separate train, and of course somebody saw them, and of course somebody talked. Andy knows all about it. He doesn't seem to have wasted any time: she was served with the divorce papers this morning."

"My daughter!" said Sir Hugh.

"Yes, your daughter. But for heaven's sake don't let's be dramatic. I expect the thing will have to go through, and they can get married next year."

"You mean she's to marry young March."

"But what else is she to do?"

"He's a rotter," said Sir Hugh.

"Oh, all men are rotters one way or another, but that's not the question. She hasn't the choice. She'll simply have to go back to town and keep quiet till it's all blown over."

Though Sir Hugh did not care for Sylvia as for Monica, and for neither of them as for Louise, his fatherhood rebelled. "Look here, she's not to be put away like that. I'm not excusing her, but she's not going to be shut up in London. She can stay here. And as for marrying March, we'll see."

Lady Oakley paced up and down. For some time she raved at him. He was a sentimental fool; he had the practical sense of a minor poet. Didn't he realise the talk it would make in the county? Didn't he understand that it might almost be kept out of the papers? That the two could marry, go abroad for a bit after peace, and then get back? She had no patience with him. Sir Hugh remained obstinate until Lady Oakley fluked an argument:

"Besides, it's impossible for her to stay here. All that talk would damage Monica."

Sir Hugh suddenly bent, and buried his face in his hands. It moved Lady Oakley to see her old husband so broken, so she went across, and put her arms about his shoulders. "It'll be all right," she whispered, and kissed him again and again on his high forehead, on his beautiful big hands. After a moment he said:

"Things seem to come all together. Now Sylvia, and yesterday that treaty."

"What treaty?" said Lady Oakley, and wondered whether he were delirious.

"The secret treaty between France and Russia. It was in the *Manchester Guardian*. I brought the issue down. Here it is." Lady Oakley took a crumpled cutting, marked December 12, 1917. It did not interest her in the least.

"Well?" she said, handing it back.

"This is hideous," said Sir Hugh, "hideous. Here's Russia practically allowed to carve bits off Germany and Austria, allowed to refuse freedom to Poland; and not a word about what the population thinks, not a word about self-determination. Is that the sort of thing Wilson brought America in for? To grab? To extend empires? And in exchange the French are not going to have only Alsace-Lorraine, without the people having a chance to vote for or against, but they're to have the coal mines of the Saar, German land! and to make a buffer State on the left bank of the Rhine, detaching it by force from Germany, in the name of universal freedom! Is that what Wilson came in for? Just to perpetuate the old injustices by making new ones? Oh, it's impossible. I've thanked God for Wilson before now, the only clean man, the only just man that the Entente

has thrown up. The Americans have come into this without asking for an acre or a dollar, the only clean people of us all — just as we went in, we thought, to defend ourselves, to protect the little neutrals. We went in clean, and we come out, crushing and grabbing, trying to annex by force, trying to squeeze the other side for money. A pretty beginning for a League of Nations! To bequeath a legacy of hatred in every corner of Europe, by leaving everywhere national sores to fester. Will Wilson escape, I wonder?"

"Oh, never mind Wilson," said Lady Oakley. "It's Sylvia we're talking about. Anyhow, you agree she must go on living in town."

"All right," said Sir Hugh miserably.

"And don't let your mind dwell on it, and all these politics. What does it matter what the *Manchester Guardian* says? Everybody knows they're in German pay. You'd better go to bed. Or read a book. Here, have this book," and she thrust the "Tree of Heaven" into his hand. Obediently he began to read.

XXX

Sir Hugh and Monica amused themselves by walking up Edgware Road; they were staying a few days in town to cheer up Sylvia, who felt lonely and outcast in her Baker Street flat. The house in Connaught Square was only half open and felt bleak, but Edgware Road was gay in spite of the grey sky and black dampness of the pavement of this soft, moist December morning.

"It's funny," said Monica, "after Knapenden. I suppose we'd get used to London if we lived here. It seems queer to see a crowd." She pointed at a butter queue outside a store.

"They seem rather short of things here," said Sir Hugh; "in spite of voluntary rations there doesn't seem to be as much bread and meat as there is at home. Still, they get sugar, which we don't. A case of gastronomic justice."

They liked the broad, half well-to-do, half squalid street. "A real London street," said Sir Hugh, "full of mercantilism, pleasure, love, and detachment. They say we don't feel the war in Sussex, and indeed we're sleepy enough. We don't think of anything in particular, but here they think of something else than war. I bet there's not much hate in London."

"Well, there's no hate in Knapenden."

Sir Hugh did not reply. He was thinking of a recent trouble. Apparently Cradoc had been taunted by Farcet, the cobbler, who had confessed to being a C. O., but as he'd heard that the Tribunal didn't want two cases in the same village and would let him off if he would appeal on domestic reasons, he'd got off easy. Cradoc seemed to have been infuriated, called him the kind of vile and crafty liar that brings ignominy on the noblest causes. He had struck him, too, and Lady Oakley, on hearing this, had apparently discerned an opportunity. She had raved to Mr. Denny about cowards ready to make benefits from their country and too cowardly to fight for it, about liars who'd defend their property if invaded, scum who ought to be flogged, starved, or exiled to an island, some other island, wretched, weedy creatures, not a single chest among the lot of them. In the end she had reported Cradoc to the Pelham Committee and he had been rearrested.

They went right up to Paddington Green. Sir Hugh talked very little, except about the latest speeches of Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Balfour on the knock-out

blow. Yes, the knock-out was all right. He too wanted the knock-out; but this endless, purposeless fighting, this entire lack of desire for any end beyond victory, this half-expressed contempt for the League of Nations, this indifference to any idea of a new peaceful order, this cynical belief that all men were greedy, must everlastingly fight and grab, could never peacefully live within their boundaries — it hurt him dreadfully. His mind swerved.

"Monica, you're not talking much. I've been thinking the last few months that you're not very happy."

"No, father, I'm afraid I'm not."

"What is it, darling?"

"Nothing. I mean — life's so difficult."

"Yes, I know, in times like these."

"Oh, it's not only the times. Father — were you very much in love with mother?"

"My dear child!" He did not know what to say. "Well, I suppose so."

"She must have been very pretty."

"Very pretty," repeated Sir Hugh, and wandered off into the past. Then Monica took his arm and murmured:

"Supposing she'd been married, father, and you'd loved her all the same; do you think you'd have been very wrong?"

"Why, of course, I . . ." He stopped. He had still loved Mrs. Douglas after her marriage. "Well," he said, "one can't help loving."

Monica did not reply for a long time, and when he looked at her again she was dabbing her red eyes through her veil. He hardly dared understand her, and yet he did; in the sweetness of his tact he did not question her, but pressed her hand against his side and said:

"Monica, darling. One can't help loving, and one should never try to. Loving is much finer than being loved. It's more generous. I don't know what you mean, but if indeed you love some one you can't marry, never mind; be happy that you can love. Being in love is being alive. Think of poor Sylvia whom we're going to see in a moment. She didn't really love Andy; he didn't love her. I'm not so sure that she loves March. She's not taking it well. She's not proud. She's not standing up for her own dignity. She's only afraid that people will be nasty to her. Oh, Monica, don't be afraid of loving. It may be a sin to give way to love, but if one doesn't love one sins against oneself. And that's mortal sin. There, don't cry, I won't question you. But if ever you want to talk, your old father will know how to listen to you. He wishes he'd had somebody to listen to him once upon a time."

XXXI

Sir Hugh was very happy. All those personal troubles and frets, Sylvia's wretched affair, Stephen's wound and strange humour, Monica's half-confessed pain, the harshness of his wife, backwashes into his family of the tide of war, he thought of them no more. Before him lay a newspaper with the incredible news that Germany had accepted the Bolshevik terms: no annexations, no indemnities, self-determination for conquered peoples. He reflected that the revolution of March in Russia must have been the revolution of the world. Never before had a conqueror accepted as a basis for a treaty anything but by the arbitrament of his sword. Always had the vanquished passed bent-browed under the patibulary fork — and all that had been blown away by the wind

of freedom. He was confirmed in his feeling that the war was an error, that the German Government had been compelled to resist the encirclement which we had plotted with France and Russia, to resist the monopoly of colonial opportunity which we had established with our confederates. Obviously Germany had been fighting for her national liberation. She had achieved it, and, with thrilling nobility, now she had Russia disrupted at her feet, she was willing to surrender all she had gained if the voice of the conquered people spoke against her. The Reichstag had expressed the German people, moderate and magnanimous, asking nothing save freedom and honour. Now Kuhlmann and the German diplomats formally gave her liberty to fallen Russia. It warmed him. "Oh," he murmured, "to-day I wish I were a German."

It struck him as marvellous that after all the German Parliament had asserted its power. That famous resolution of July, foregoing annexations and indemnities, backed by the German Government, denounced everywhere as a peace plot, a peace trap, a peace offensive — it was honest. Parliament did count after all, in Germany. He remembered his Whiggish horror when, some months before, he realised the impotency of the British Parliament: it had not been consulted before Sir Edward Grey sent out the ultimatum, but was only asked to vote money for the war. This was a reassertion of Parliament.

This idea was delicious to him, for Sir Hugh believed in Parliament, though he did not believe in the people. A member of Parliament was still to him to a degree anointed. Just then he forgot that Parliament was mainly made up of men of his own class, and that lately he had hated his own class. He had hated them for their

revengefulness, for their inability to desire a better order; he had hated their frivolity, the abuse which had met the Russian Revolution because it deprived us of an ally; the lack of any sympathy with the emancipation of the Russian people from a sanguinary Tsar; he had hated the schoolboy vapidness of the clubs where nobody wanted to know whether the socialist State could be worked in practice — but where men could conduct long and earnest discussions as to whether the right name was Bolshevik or Bolshevist. He forgot all that; unable to hate the Germans, he was now even unable to hate the British. "All over," he thought. "Such an example of renunciation will inflame history; Wilson and the Americans, people who want peace and justice, have at last found their ally, Germany, against the Tariffists, Revanchists, and company promoters of England and France."

He smoked. He caressed Kallikrates, who all that evening was in one of his soft moods, willing to be turned upon his back and to be boneless, just warm flesh and golden fur to crumple, velvety gloved paws to be held. He read most of "The Old Huntsman." Mr. Sassoon's verse, often angry, often sweet, came to him as from far away. Yes, it was nearly over, the tragedy of the home-coming soldier:

"Propped on a stick he viewed the August weald;
Squat orchard trees and oasts with painted cowls;
A homely, tangled hedge, a corn-stocked field,
With sound of barking dogs and farmyard fowls.
And he'd come home again to find it more
Desirable than ever it was before.
How right it seemed that he should reach the span
Of comfortable years allowed to man!
Splendid to eat and sleep and choose a wife,
Safe with his wound, a citizen of life.

He hobbled blithely through the garden gate,
And thought: 'Thank God, they had to amputate.'"

Yes, no more of that. And no more ground for the bitterness of "Base Details", which he had found in the *Cambridge Magazine:*

"If I were fierce, and bald, and short of breath,
I'd live with scarlet majors at the Base
And speed glum heroes up the line to death.
You'd see me with my puffy, petulant face,
Guzzling and gulping in the best hotel,
Reading the Roll of Honour. "Poor young chap,"
I'd say — 'I used to know his father well;
Yes, we've lost heavily in this last scrap.'
And when the war is done and youth stone dead,
I'd toddle safely home and die — in bed."

It made him laugh to-night instead of grind his teeth. And when again he read "Blighters", in which Mr. Sassoon lashes himself into righteous fury at the idea of the people at home in music-halls, as he read aloud:

"I'd like to see a Tank come down the stalls,
Lurching to rag-time tunes, or 'Home, Sweet Home',
And there'd be no more jokes in music-halls,
To mock the riddled corpses round Bapaume."

Sir Hugh thought: "Yes, he's right. It's very beautiful. We shall want all that hate of war to make the love of peace. But it's over. Lloyd George must state his war aims now; he can't get out of it. And in the presence of what the Germans have done at Brest-Litovsk he won't be able to demand anything but equal justice. The war's over."

He was still in that state when he went to bed. Just as he began to feel drowsy there came a knock at his door and Lady Oakley came in. As she switched on the

light and sat down upon his bed he stared; never before had his wife come into his bedroom; her tradition was to wait in her own and never lock her door. She seemed conscious of it. Handsome and big in her pink dressing-gown, she looked smaller than usual.

"Hugh," she said hurriedly, "I'm sorry to disturb you — but it's all so difficult."

"What's difficult?" asked Sir Hugh.

"Everything. It's all been so different between us this last year." She looked so distressed that he took a plump hand which nervously grasped his own.

"Surely not, Lena," he said. "Of course, one can't always agree. But they're little things."

"No, no," said Lady Oakley, "they're not little things. I hardly know what I mean, but we seem to think so differently about things now." Sir Hugh was silent, and she went on. "It's as if you thought me hard and cruel, as if you didn't care for me any more. Oh, yes, it is," she went on as he tried to reply. "You say things to me. Things you wouldn't have said once. The other day you told me to mind my own business and that no woman at all and no man over forty had any right to an opinion about the war, because their lives were not at stake."

"Well . . ."

"Yes, I know what you meant. It's true in a way, though it's not: how do you think I feel about Stephen being crocked up? It's not that . . . it's pushing me out."

"Lena, dear," said Sir Hugh, drawing her down. But though there was no hostility in him there was no warmth. Yes, they had whirled asunder. He was surprised as she answered his movement, flung herself down upon him, so that he could feel her big breast heave. She clasped him

in her arms, showering hot kisses upon his cheeks and lips. He did not repulse her, and he ached as through her sobs she murmured:

"Don't stop loving me. You must always love me, Ug." He was all pity. How long it was since she had called him Ug! He kissed her gently, stroked the heavy hair. He did not understand why suddenly she leapt up and, with a hurried "good-night", left the room. He was sweet and innocent, and so his happy slumber was spared the picture of the woman in the next room, who lay upon her bed, and wept, and screamed into her pillow, because she had drifted away from her man, because the intellectual gulf that lies between lovers could no longer be bridged by the kiss that inflames. Half through the night she cried. She was too old. There was nothing left her with which to get him back.

BOOK THREE

THE LONE GREY COMPANY

The war is the world

(Alan George)

BOOK THREE

THE LONE GREY COMPANY

I

Only after a few days did Sir Hugh realise what had happened. He was almost incredulous when precipitated from his serenities; he bought newspaper after newspaper, trying to understand the drama of Brest-Litovsk. He shrank from the screaming abuse of the newspaper leaders, the pandemonium of accusation, against the Germans of treachery, against the Bolsheviks of venality, against the English pacifists of disloyalty. The world was a wilderness of yahoos, and the horror of it was that it all seemed true. Only three days after his gesture of apparent noble abnegation the German had shown himself such as he was painted in the blood press; he had shown himself desirous, greedy, crafty, unfit for human intercourse. They were right, then! Northcliffe was right! Lloyd-George was right! They had been right all along in preventing peace before the German was done. Hard upon the noble declaration of fair treatment for Russia, upon the gift of freedom to the little Russian border States, something had happened; the jackboot had trodden the attaché case — unless, which seemed likely, the attaché case had been an accomplice. The Bolsheviks had found that if the German accepted self-determination for Courland, Poland, Lithuania, it was because he had already installed into power crèatures of his own, who had passed a sham

vote in his favour. Trickery! Always trickery! No fair play could come from the German.

Sir Hugh was haunted also by a terrible trifle which had just occurred to him. Not only had he been wrong, but those people whom he looked upon as blindly hostile, stupid people, had been right. Beresford was right, Maxse, Kipling, Curzon — all the people whom he had disliked for so long, the people who loved conscription, and who wouldn't wait, all the gross people who seemed to hate art and delicate feeling, who went in with the predatory capitalist, the concessionaire descending upon a colony as a vulture, they had been right. They had been right to warn us that Germany was the enemy; they had rightly urged that we should grant her no mercy, had been right on cotton, on the blockade, on reprisals. Sir Hugh thought it tragic that such people should be right; if their minds alone could read the mind of man, then indeed the making of mankind was a divine error.

He stood for a long time in Udimore copse. The January air was fresh and misty. The birches in the mist made monstrous shapes. "This," he felt, "is the end of all things. What's the good of Lloyd-George having declared his war aims the other day? They're sound enough, fair enough. The desire of the imperialist for more land, for yet more blood-soaked land, is not too manifest in his speech; there's nothing in it to show that we want to boycott Germany forever and thus forever keep up her hatred; we're not asking for monstrous indemnities, but only for reparation of damage; he doesn't seem ready to force upon people domination by the sword. I suppose it means that even our empire-grubbers are affected by new ideas. But what's the good? What's the good of Wilson's speech, even though it has nobility? What does it matter if it compares with Lloyd-George's as a Virgil-

ian eclogue compares with an auctioneer's patter? I like Wilson's fourteen points; I really believe that he does want to make an end of these eternal chariots and horses, that he does want to disarm and create a League of Nations. But can one just man save a doomed city? If we can't trust the German, what can we do save slay him? And at bottom we aren't much better. Oh, why can't mankind commit hara-kiri and be done?"

He came back late in the afternoon, having walked a long way and eaten a bad lunch at Pett. He found his family at tea, Stephen silent, while Lady Oakley raved against the food hoarders of Villa-Land, and promised herself to compel Sir John Jesmond to have the houses searched. It would be a proud day when she got them all fined. She passed on to Donnington Hall and to the scandal of giving German officers square meals. She was very angry, having sent a letter about Donnington Hall to a newspaper, which had returned it, stating that it was libellous. Now she sat chewing buttered toast, and plotting for the Hun rations of skilly. "Give them dog biscuits; just the thing for curs." Sir Hugh's ears were filled with the hysterical outcry, suspicions, fears of peace traps, fears of Bolo, who lurked in every house, extracting precious information from the boot-boy at the cost of much German gold; hates and revenges, aimless demands for air reprisals, for the hanging of submarine crews, for the stoppage of tobacco to German prisoners. She painted a world of cruelty, and she did not justify it by a single desire to make a new world where strife would be less, war less frequent, justice more obvious. "Serve 'em out," and "Get some of our own back," such was the preface to the new times. "League of Nations," said Lady Oakley, "stuff and nonsense." The worst of it was Sir Hugh felt that she was right. Stuff and nonsense,

blood and tears, that was the history of the world, past and future.

After a while Stephen talked. He was depressed, for the medical board had that morning invalided him out. He did not want to go back to the army, but he disliked being scrapped. So he talked rather bitterly of Lansdowne and Lichnowsky, poor old idealists who did not understand what thieves' kitchens they lived in. The only thing that pleased his ironic sense was that the British papers called Lansdowne senile and that the German papers applied the same adjective to Lichnowsky. Evidently if one didn't like war, one was senile. The only thing that bothered him was that every time he met somebody who was manifestly senile, that person simply wallowed in war. Everybody liked the war except the men who did the fighting. "After all," he said, "what's the good of talking? It's so small, all this. People kick up no end of a dust about this war, as if there'd never been a war before. Somebody wrote to me while I was out there, just because I asked for a library list, one of those solemn, lantern-jawed letters, asking me whether this business of literature and art didn't seem petty by the side of the great issues which, etc., etc., and didn't all that sort of thing feel to me like Lilliput! I replied that art and literature last forever and Lilliput's in Flanders."

Nobody spoke for some time. It was understood that Stephen must not be irritated. After a while Stephen threw himself back and, staring at the ceiling, began to sing in a low voice:

"I want to go home, I want to go home,
I don't want to go to the trenches no more,
With pip-squeaks and whizz-bangs a-bursting galore.
I'd much sooner be
Where the Allemand can't get me.

Oh my! I don't want to die.
I want to go home."

The old people looked at their son fearfully. What a state he was in! But Louise, who was sitting by his side, bent forward and with an air of smiling irony, sang back to him:

" Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!
A charm from the skies seems to hallow us there,
Which, seek thro' the world, is ne'er met with elsewhere.
Home! home! sweet, sweet home!
There's no place like home! There's no place like home!"

The young man stared, then slapped his unwounded leg and laughed:

" Louise! you Victorian coughdrop! "

All laughed together, but Lady Oakley, who observed the expression in their eyes, suddenly stopped laughing. Why not? The girl would look after him. Three years his senior; yes. But that wouldn't matter. A year after his wedding a man didn't know what his wife looked like; he never looked at her.

Sir Hugh went into the study, picking up Kallikrates as he went. He walked up and down, nursing the cat, who grew rigid, for he resented having been disturbed, and stuck hard paws into his master's breast. Wearied by the repulse, Sir Hugh put him down. He tried to read " Bel Ami", but that day the engaging scoundrel sickened him.

II

" KEEPING well? " said Port.

" So-so," replied Keele. " I get a bit of a twisty pain these wet mornings."

"Ah! what are you doing about pigs?"

"I'm thinking of giving up Gloucesters. You tried Middle White?"

"Yes, fine pig, Middle White, fine pig. Only there's feeding. What d'you expect to get out of four pounds of cake a day for a breeding sow?"

"Can't be done," said Keele. "I'm turning mine out; I've got half a dozen young gilts out now. They pick up a bit, grass and acorns. They're due to pig down in March."

"Ah, well," said Port. "Bacon fetches good prices now. Things might be worse."

III

"Angus," said Sir Hugh, "I don't much like this new idea of ministers writing articles in the papers. Here's Sir Frederick Smith in the *Evening Standard,* and Clynes in the *Weekly Dispatch,* and I seem to have seen an article by Hodge."

"New times, new times," said Sir Angus (who had just been made a K. B. E.), "you mustn't turn into an old fogey. To-day everything's hustle. We want zip."

"Zip!" said Sir Hugh. "The very word makes me sick. Did Pitt have zip? I suppose Disraeli had zip? A cabinet minister ought to have dignity."

"Dignity be damned!" said Sir Angus. "We don't want any dignity, especially in business, whatever H. E. Morgan may say. Your ideal cabinet minister, Hugh, is a sort of waxwork at Madame Tussaud's."

"Well, your sort is a vote-in-the-slot machine."

"Anyhow, the new politician is right there with the goods," said Sir Angus, who was cultivating Americanisms. "Your fungus-grown politician was all right in the

old days, but in this war it's up to him to get a move on. Zip, my boy, zip."

"I suppose," said Sir Hugh, "that Hertling has what you call zip when he proposes to hold on to Belgium until we get out of Malta and Gib. I suppose Italy is exhibiting zip. Have you read the *Manchester Guardian?*"

"No. You don't think I read pacifist papers?"

"If you read pacifist papers and gave up the drug habit, as represented by the other papers, you'd know that the Italian secret treaty was made in April, '15, just before they refused to be bought off by Austria because they'd been bought in by us. No bones about it; they aren't only to have the Trentino and the other places where their beloved brethren had been suffering for thirty years at the hands of their own ally. They're to have most of the Dalmatian coast, because it was Roman in the year dot, and a share of the booty in Asia Minor; no damned self-determination for the Greeks. Grab all you can. No coast for Austria: bottle her up, and learn nothing from the example of Serbia who's made three wars so far because we bottled her up. Shove, grab, don't have principles, they get in the way."

Sir Angus laughed at him. When at last they parted Sir Angus summed up the philosophy of the day: "Say what you like; we've got to win this war and damn the consequences." Sir Hugh remembered Lord Milner's phrase: the consequences had been most unpleasant. He walked to Trafalgar Square, observing with a certain distaste the appeals to an imperial people: "Come and buy war bonds at the bank"; "A hundred and twenty-four cartridges for 15*s* 6*d*." Against the front of the National Gallery, above the tank and the crowds that squeezed in between the captured German guns, was the most displeasing of boards: a list of the purchasing per-

formances of provincial towns, with Glasgow arrogant at the top, and envious Birmingham yapping below. "Don't come and save the country," thought Sir Hugh angrily. "No, that wouldn't appeal to you, John Citizen. Come and lick Glasgow; that's more like it. Don't work together; work against one another. Hate and rivalry are the rule of the world; let's get Manchester to hate Cardiff, and they'll put their money down to humiliate each other, pay up for local hatred, but not for love of England." And yet, all through his protest ran the insistent feeling that he had been wrong so far, that Lord Northcliffe and Lord Beaverbrook alone had understood the need of the day. He could not yet love them; but he could respect them.

He found Sylvia alone, and rather depressed in her flat. The decree nisi had been pronounced two days before. "How are you?" asked Sir Hugh.

"Pretty well, rather lonely. Of course I can't show myself just now."

"Why don't you come down to Knapenden for a while?"

"You know quite well mother doesn't want me. Besides, Oliver may be coming back on leave."

"Oh, yes," said Sir Hugh, embarrassed. He supposed he must acknowledge March. Seemed strange that the boy was in a way Sylvia's husband. He felt that he must acknowledge him formally.

"Sylvia," he said, "now it's all over you're not sorry?"

"Oh, I don't know. It's all very dull."

She complained of social exclusion. March wrote every day, but, of course, one wanted to go about and all that. She looked beautiful, but discontented, and Sir Hugh grew more assured that she did not love the young man. Then her state would be worse than her former

one. He shrank from such exposures, and found a material question to raise.

"Of course until you marry we'll have to make you an allowance."

"Oh, you needn't. Andy's paying eight hundred a year until the decree is made absolute."

"What?" cried Sir Hugh. He was furious. Not with Jervaulx, who sinned only by generosity, but with Sylvia, who accepted his money. She should not take it. He forbade it. Not a penny should she take from Jervaulx. Had she no pride? no dignity?

"Well," said Sylvia, exasperated, "he's got to make me an allowance. The solicitor says it's the law." They had a long, harsh wrangle. Sylvia wanted to keep the allowance, because money from Andy carried no control, while money from her father gave him rights of censure.

"I won't have it," he said, again and again. "I won't have it. D'you understand? Where's his last cheque? It must be returned at once."

"It can't be returned," said Sylvia, beginning to cry. "It's paid direct into my bank every month."

"Write to your banker at once telling him to return it. And tell him to inform me how much he's received in these four months, so that I may pay it back. Give me the letter, I'll post it."

After a long scene the letter was written. Then Sylvia flung down the pen and stamped: "You're all against me. You all want to kick me when I'm down. I hate you. I hate you."

"So do I," shouted Sir Hugh, and slammed the door behind him.

A few minutes later, in Baker Street, he felt remorseful. So he sent by a messenger boy an enormous bunch of Parma violets and a note: "Sylvia, dear, your father has

the pride of age and the temper of youth. He asks pardon of his beautiful daughter, and hopes that when next she comes to cheer his waning years, she will bring forgiveness in her eyes of amber."

IV

If Sir Hugh was simple for a human being, Lady Oakley was still simpler for a woman. She had never finessed a queen in her life. She loved her son, she was anxious not to thrust irritating ideas upon him, and yet she always irritated him. Sometimes she asked herself why the Stephen of 1918 was so different from the Stephen of 1914, and still more from the boisterous boy who used to write her long letters from school and beg to be taken when she went into Hastings to shop. "It's war," she reflected gloomily. "His wound and all that." Yet she knew that it was not only his wound; it was something she could not get hold of, a mental difference, rather similar to the one which had arisen between her and her husband — they seemed so wrong-headed, both of them. It never struck her that they should be let alone; it did not occur to her that they might differ from her politically. When there was an argument, such as the night before, when Stephen had referred to Carson's last speech as a steady bellow, and declared that he was preparing a song called "The Carson Ragtime", to which the chorus would be: "Stick it out, stick it out", and when Sir Hugh added that nowadays sticking it out was a virtue which was its own reward, Lady Oakley thought they were being merely irritating.

That day, thinking herself rather artful, as is the way of the simple, she decided to influence Stephen towards a marriage with Louise. She was clumsy enough to begin

by talking of the news of the day. (" I mustn't show my hand," she thought.) She talked of the Versailles Conference, congratulated herself on the formation at last of a strong allied body which would soon make an end of the kid-gloved methods of this weak-kneed government. She went on to rejoice over the dismissal of Sir William Robertson, Lord Jellicoe, and General Trenchard. She did not realise that as she talked, and as Stephen smoked, his inner self was grinning at her maliciously, and saying: " Go on! sack 'em all, smash 'em all, tie 'em down. Let's have more cabals in the newspapers, more self-advertisements of Lloyd-George's. Go on. Get some new brooms in. You'll soon wear 'em out; and then down with 'em, out with 'em, serve 'em out in the name of fair dealing."

Lady Oakley took his silence for an evidence of conversion. As an amusing tidbit of information she told him that the day before, when she went into the chemist's shop at Hastings, where she sometimes dealt, she had had the privilege of ordering out an old naturalised German watchmaker who used to wind their clocks. He slunk out, she said, like a beaten cur. " I can't understand it," she added. " The chemist said that he'd had the German as a friend for twenty years. I told him he ought to be ashamed of himself. He talked some nonsense about the man having been ruined by the war. Ruined! He ought to be cut into little pieces. Of course, I'll never go into the shop again."

" Serve them out," said Stephen's inner self. " That's the way to prepare the new times, the times of freedom and universal good will. Go on! Grind their faces, jump on the individual if you can't down the nation. That's the way to make them friendly and establish the reign of peace in the world."

Lady Oakley went on to talk of air raids, and the need

for the establishment of German prisoner camps in the raid areas.

"Tie 'em up, string 'em up," murmured Stephen's double. "They're prisoners, you've got 'em in your power. Show your capacity for mercy. Show your superiority over the Hun by irritating him. Go on! prove your doctrine orthodox by apostolic blows and knocks."

Then she asked him what he had decided as to his career.

"Oh, I dunno," said Stephen. "I've talked to father about going into the Bank. It's either that or politics, but I'm afraid you wouldn't like my politics."

"Oh," said Lady Oakley, ignoring the part which did not interest her. "Yes, your father did say something to me about your going into the Bank. Are you sure you'd like that?"

"Haven't any option. I'm too old for a respectable occupation, such as the Bar, or the diplomatic, or such-like forms of public-spirited self-advancement."

"Nonsense," said Lady Oakley, "but still if you prefer the Bank, I don't see why you shouldn't go into it. It would be better in a way. You'd be in a position to marry pretty soon, if you wanted to." Stephen did not reply, and Lady Oakley, unable to hold a trump, added as casually as she could: "I suppose you miss Louise now."

"It might be rather fun making money," said Stephen, as if he had not heard the allusion.

Lady Oakley was embarrassed. Her son puzzled her. She realised vaguely that he had aged during the war, and yet that he was very raw. She wondered how the inexperienced old-young man would navigate the seas of finance and of love.

Then Stephen said suddenly: "Louise is a good sort,"

and stumped out. A few minutes later she saw him walking his horse down the lime avenue.

Stephen's meditations did not at once fasten on Louise. He still had to rid himself of maternally induced irritations. The events of the war were significant to him; they were not just battles and dates, but a diagram of the world mind. A chaotic diagram. Too many things happened; the political flavour of the period was nasty to his palate. He had no love for people like Robertson and Jellicoe, for he hated all brass hats, nor for financiers, like Cowdray, only he did not like the way in which these people were first of all deprived of their public credit by campaigns in the newspapers, by untrue statements that they had resigned, and then suddenly dismissed without a hearing. To his hard mind, either we were convicted as fools for having stood them for forty years or the whole show was being run by a press ramp. All Oakleys rather disliked the press. They did not understand the new politics. Stephen was intelligent enough to see that the new politics fitted the new public, that the *Daily Mail* and the yellow press generally were educating millions of people who but for them would read nothing at all. But all Oakleys hated loud publicity. Thus Stephen was shocked by Clemenceau's exposure of the Austrian Emperor's peace offer. It was a private offer, made under strict conditions of secrecy, but we had broken our word, shown the letter to odd people, and kept President Wilson in the dark — perhaps because we were afraid he might act on it. And now once more we were playing a foul game: we were advertising this secret offer in the newspapers. Not only were we not playing the game, but this was part of the new, vulgar way of doing things, the noisy, yapping way of the underbred, the "yah! take that!" way. "Guttersnipes in office," thought Stephen,

and as his horse trotted over the moist turf, he thought still more bitterly that the guttersnipes were more effective in action than the men of a finer breed. "I suppose we're effete. But God help New England."

He stopped for a moment at Ascalon Farm to talk to Hart. The farmer was in a violent mood because the local labourers had formed a trade-union branch.

"We'll have 'em striking next," he growled. "Same as on the Clyde. Ought to shoot a few of 'em."

"What are they going to strike for?" asked Stephen.

"They don't know themselves. They're getting more wages than ever they've had. They just strike for a bit of a change, or because an agitator comes down and tells 'em the tale."

Stephen said nothing. The explanation seemed insufficient. Surely men wouldn't leave their work and live on strike pay, or starve, without a grievance, just because an agitator talked. One heard too much about agitators; agitators could not seduce, they could only give a voice to a grievance. He smiled as he thought of agitators fomenting a strike on the Stock Exchange, of the Bishop of London bringing off a successful agitation among Christians. As he did not want to discuss generalities, he congratulated Molly on her approaching marriage. Hart was a little shamefaced, for he assumed that Stephen's attitude was the same as Lady Oakley's.

"I don't hold with conscientious objectors myself," he said. "Still it's my gal's going to marry him, not me."

As Stephen went across the marsh, he thought less in general and more of himself, as if milk-white Molly had turned his mind to human beings. He felt rather lonely. His father was very little in the house, and strangely depressed; his mother adored him, but she was war-mad, as if she were the victim of a religious revival, of a war

religion comprising the fine, manly faith of Mr. Bottomley, the revengefulness of Mr. Raemakers, and the pure stucco of Mr. Ian Hay — clean living and no damned thinking. Monica was no good either; since she had come back from Rochester she moved in a mechanical dream, doing silly jobs in pen and ink for her mother and father, and making endless, ill-fitting garments for British prisoners who'd done her no harm. Louise was the only good spot. After a row with one's mother, when one's mother had been raving against Huns, and Russians, and Poles, and everybody else, and asking the Home Office to have them driven out of Brighton and Maidenhead into the raid areas, so as to jolly well learn 'em to be foreigners, one could always go to Louise. Louise was the only creature he knew who lived above the battle. White and eternal, always soft, always smiling, never harsh, never noisy, demanding and giving little, just beautifully being, as Henry James said. His mind took a turn. "I'm fed up," he thought. "I'll go to a place where they're neutral. No good; neutrals are bound to be still more patriotic than we are; they don't risk anything. No, what I need is an agnostic monastery." He smiled, and soothed by the steady amble of his horse, he thought again of Louise. "She's like candlelight," he thought. "The only light that doesn't hurt the eyes."

V

"Monica," said Sir Hugh, "don't you think it's dreadful that we should be out here again seeing the lambs?"

"Why?" asked the girl, surprised; "don't you think they're sweet?"

"Yes — they're like toys — but we came out here last year, you and I, and the year before, and all the years

before, right down to the time when you were as tottery on your legs as those woolly lambs. It goes on forever. For nothing. Lambs turn into sheep, and sheep into mutton, just as boys turn into men, and men into soldiers. One ends as cannon fodder, and the other as shepherd's pie."

"Don't," murmured Monica. "I think you're horrid. Why will you always look at things like that? Why can't you be glad that it's spring again, that everything round you is getting green and smelling sweet?"

"In April even graveyards smell sweet."

"But, father, is there no joy of life for you? You didn't always talk like this. You used to be glad when the spring came. You used to say that whenever the world came alive again, so did you."

Sir Hugh laughed. "Ah, yes, those were the days of spring onions, these are the days of spring offensives. What's the good of all this, coming up only to die? What's the use of mother muddlepate, Nature, as they call her, breeding and breeding, only to kill?"

Monica did not reply for a moment, then said in a shaky voice: "You're horrid, father, horrid, like the rest. Stephen's horrid, full of sneers. Yesterday he was laughing at a man in his battalion; he was an actor, and his name was Hubert Diss. As he didn't think Diss a good name he called himself Arundel. When he went into the army he had to be Private Diss, and Stephen said he used to brag about the fine restoration of his simplicity. Well, he got hit and was discharged. During his convalescence he got an engagement and called himself Diss-Arundel. Now he's got a part in London, and Stephen says Diss is dead, while Arundel has risen. This, he says, is the fine restoration of sophistication. That's all the war has done for Diss, he says, that's all it's done for

everything. I think it's hateful; you take all the courage out of us. How can one believe in the war if one doesn't think it makes people finer? "

" Why believe in it? " said Sir Hugh.

" Don't," cried Monica, in a tone which puzzled him. " Some one — I was told that the war has brought the world to a blind alley — oh, don't take things away from me. I must believe in it, unless you can give me something else to believe in."

" Monica, dear," said Sir Hugh, taking her arm, " don't force yourself to believe in things you don't believe in. The war's here, so is smallpox; we must get rid of both of them. Yes, you're right. The world's in a blind alley. And we shan't get it out, get rid of war, I mean, for ever, unless we understand the war, unless we realise that it was engineered in the interests of separate nationalities and that so long as sharp national differences are kept up, so long will war continue to break out. Oh, I know you can make a case just as the Germans can; just as the devil is sometimes a logician. But one can make a better case out of lies, says Anatole France, than out of the truth, because lies are made to fit the case. I wonder how you can be taken in, Monica, by all this jingo talk. I used to think you women had a brain, perhaps not exactly a brain, but shall we say a substitute."

" Thank you, father," said Monica, smiling, " I like your masculine arrogance; let me tell you that women do quite as well with their mental margarine as you men with your intellectual butter."

" Sorry, didn't mean to be rude. Only you women let such passion into your politics. You believe anything, even the newspapers. And you never get inside the news."

"Well, I know all about the German offensive."

"Oh, never mind the German offensive. Whether they get through or not, and whether or not we get licked, all that won't change the only thing that matters: the results of the offensive of ambition and greed against the crumbling front of human decency. Look at the world we're living in. Here are the Germans, after advertising everywhere their offer of liberty to all the subject races, their desire to take from their enemy only reparation for actual damage, making last week with the Bolsheviks a treaty which hands over to Germany a territory larger than this country, where they will doubtless see to it that German bayonets persuade the people to vote for German rule. They don't want a penny, and they take three hundred millions in gold from that unhappy country. They don't want any unfair advantages, and they force Russia to mortgage her timber, her metals, to keep her frontiers open to German goods. And they give liberty to Ukraine — retaining the right to police it."

"That's just like the Germans," said Monica.

"Alas! It is also like us. We had the right to police Egypt, and before 1914 was over we bagged it. We all do the same. Here are the Germans snatching, snatching all the Roumanian coast, and offering as compensation Russian lands which don't belong to them. We're just the same. The Foreign Office assures Miss Durham this month that they have full sympathy with Albania — and doesn't say that three years ago, by our secret treaty with Italy, we reserved the right to cut up Albania, and share her out between our Allies. Three or four months ago Wilson said that we did not want to break up Austria — we let him say that without telling him that we had secret treaties giving Italy German land in the Tyrol, Slav land on the coast; a secret treaty with Roumania

giving her thousands of miles of Magyar land. Lord Robert Cecil said we wanted no conquests, Asquith said we wanted nothing but freedom — and we see the Russian foreign minister writing to the Russian ambassador three years ago that we asked for their benevolent attitude towards our political aspirations: following on which we bagged the neutral zone in Persia. Grab and grab. There isn't a nation in Europe which ought not to have upon its coat-of-arms an open maw snappant."

After a moment he went on again. "I shouldn't mind it so much if there weren't such a lot of cant, if we applied the same rule to our enemies and ourselves. The Germans enter Ukraine 'to restore order' and we yell; on the other hand all our papers demand a Japanese invasion of Russia, 'to restore order', and we cheer. Am I to believe that Japan has no imperial ambitions, that her war with China and its resultant conquests, her war with Russia and its resultant conquests, were forced on her reluctant government for self-defense? It's always exasperated nationality claiming historic rights. And in the matter of nationality, the most stupid invention of mankind, lies and cynicism, are allowed. It's everywhere the same. It's all right that Alsace-Lorraine should be returned in virtue of a self-determination so implicit that she isn't to be allowed to vote, but it's not all right that Turkey should recover Kars and Batum which Russia took from her in 1878. Oh! I'd rather be a decent highwayman than an attaché in a chancellery. And it all goes on. The people can do nothing to stop it. They're drugged with a continual hymn of hate. Hate is the strong wine with which we drug them; in this, the fourth year of war, our newspapers fill their columns with old stories of atrocities, and we publish 'Murder Most Foul', a pandemonium of horrors fit to make the people hate

their enemy, and therefore to fight him. We're afraid they'd stop fighting if they didn't hate. We're never afraid of anything except of love."

It was evident that Monica's mind had fastened only on the last word, for she said: "Love is quite as cruel as hate, father. It may hurt one more."

Sir Hugh, after a moment, understood that she was speaking personally. He knew something had happened in the last year, but though he was a father he still practised tact. "Yes, I know, but the pains of love leave nobility behind."

"I wonder what you would say, father, if I told you that I had . . . Oh, I can't tell you. One ought not to love people one can't marry."

"No," said Sir Hugh, very uncomfortable.

"Only it's so difficult. Mr. Hurn writes to me from time to time."

"Do you like him?" asked Sir Hugh, rather confused, for Hurn was a bachelor.

"Yes, only he's so queer now. The war seems to have upset him; he's so grave and religious; so excited. It's as if the war'd spoiled people."

"Yes, it spoils us all. I'm afraid it's spoiled something in you, my dear, smashed some dreams of yours."

"Dreams are the stuff that worlds are made of," quoted Monica, and her voice shook as she remembered.

Sir Hugh did not reply for some time, for that phrase pleased him. Then, irrelevantly, he said: "Won't you tell me?"

"Father — there was somebody, and I thought I cared for him, and he for me — we couldn't marry. He's married. It's all right; time will put it right . . ." With a wry mouth she searched for her handkerchief; her hands trembled. Sir Hugh took her into his arms and there

let her stay for a long time, asking of her no more than she would tell, and gently caressing the bent brown head.

VI

THE "King's Arms" was almost empty that April evening, for it was a Thursday, and the young men, rather short of money, preferred the diversions of the spring and were loafing with the girls in the lanes. Also there was a hint of late frost in the air, and the older men were getting in the lambs. Mr. Cashel stood behind the bar, as ever polishing a tumbler, talking in a low voice to Farcet. At the long table sat only Hart and a stranger face to face, watched from the other table by Keele, who pretended to smoke, but listened.

"Make it eighty-eight pounds ten," said Hart, "and the stack's yours."

"Can't be done. Eighty-six pound's all it's worth to me."

"Now, Mr. Brough, you know that timber'd fetch ninety-five pound any day if I was to cart it over to Hastings. They're just squalling for timber for fishing smacks, what with the price of fish and what with U-boats sinking 'em."

"No good to me," said Brough. He was a big farmer from the other side of Rye. A stocky, broad-faced man, he had sly eyes, and though his price was fair enough, Hart had the cunning of the peasant, and was holding out because he could not understand what Brough wanted the timber for. This suggested infinite profits, an intolerable idea. "'Ave another whiskey," said Hart desperately.

"Don't mind if I do," said Brough. He was sure of himself, and not afraid of liquor. He knew why they

were not drinking ale, but saw no reason why Hart should not stand him spirits in this little public-house where the law on treating was occasionally forgotten.

"Well now," said Hart, "I'll throw it away on yer. Make it eighty-eight pounds."

"Oh, well," said Brough generously. "I don't want you to feel I've come for nothing. Eighty-seven pounds."

Hart looked at him gloomily. "Nicely seasoned," he said. "Just what you want for your new cowshed."

"It ain't for a cowshed," said Brough enigmatically. "We said eighty-seven pounds, didn't we?"

"No, we didn't," said Hart, "we said eighty-eight."

"Ah, well," said Brough, "never mind. Say no more about it. I owe you a drink. But I'll be running across you at Tenterden next week. So it can keep. I must be going now."

Hart protested. It wasn't closing time yet. So Farmer Brough, having swept aside the discussion, supplied a little small talk:

"Hope we're going to have a better year than last one. As I was putting in my spring sowings, I said to myself: what's the good of farming in this country? You can't make a living; it's all you can do to keep alive, what with wages, and oil-cake going up every day. I'd like to know what the government's up to with its twenty-five bob a week! My men never asked for twenty-five bob a week until the people in London got the idea. And it won't stop there, Mr. Hart; there's one committee given them thirty bob already. What for? When I was a nipper a man'd do well on eleven bob a week, and bring up ten children on it too."

Hart agreed abundantly. A rapid, if inaccurate, calculation enabled him to prove that the fixed price of corn for five years wouldn't allow of more than a pound a

week at the outside. One might throw in half a load of logs, and perhaps a goose at Michaelmas, he added generously.

They talked of the newly broken land, of the iniquitous behaviour of the committee which forced farmers to break pasture.

"They'll get a dirty crop out of that land," said Farmer Brough. "Sarve 'em right. They've ploughed up a bit of down by Jenkins'. You should see it! They call it the 'Plague of Egypt', 'cos last year they only got seven ears of thin wheat out of the whole field. And this year'll be as bad. Land's full of muck, rotten with campion from end to end. Whatever they do, sharps'll be something dreadful."

"Come, Mr. Brough, make it eighty-eight pound. I don't want to think you've come for nothing."

Brough did not reply, but asked Keele for news of his son.

"He's doing well," said the old farmer, who by now had gained pride in his son. "He's a full capting now, and he's got the Military Cross." Then, with a vicious wink, he said to Hart: "So Cradoc's come back again. Poppin' in and out of jail, ain't he, like the old man in the barometer."

"You hold your jaw," said Hart furiously. He wasn't going to have his family affairs mixed up with a bargain. He felt the need to explain to Brough:

"Cradoc ain't done anything, you know, only he's a conscientious objector. Don't you listen to that old sweep; he's only jealous 'cos Cradoc's got a good business, and is going to marry my gal. You dirty old tyke, you can't keep one of your boys and girls on the muck heap you call a farm. I'd sooner Molly married a conscientious objector any day than one of your la-di-da

officers. Your fine gentleman'll come back to touch his hat to Squire, and be pleased to say 'thank you' for a tanner tip. When the war's over there's lots of people'll know the difference. 'It weren't such a bad time in a way' they'll say. They'll be sorry, some of them."

"So you'll be," said Keele, "with your gal married to one of the Kaiser's pals."

"It's all very fine your talking," said Hart. "I ain't a conscientious objector myself, but I dunno if I wouldn't have been if I'd been of military age. Mightn't have had the pluck, though. It ain't so nice sitting in prison and hunger-striking, and having your stomach shoved into your feet; that's what it feels like when they feed you by force. I don't mind him. He's against the war anyway, and one might do worse than stop the war. I don't think it pays, and if it doesn't pay what's it for? If a thing don't pay don't do it. That's what I said to the vicar the other day when he asked me to promise not to buy the new reaper I've got to get after the war from the Germans. I said to him: 'I want a good reaper and a cheap one. And if it's all that, I don't care if it's of the devil's make.' He didn't seem to like it," added the farmer with a chuckle. "I calls it ungrateful: vicar makes his living out of the devil."

Keele laughed, reconciled by this mild blasphemy.

"Vicar talked about atrocities and all that. Told him I didn't care: if a man sells me a cheap reaper he can have his atrocities if he don't do 'em here. He went on in a rare old way, asked me if I didn't value my liberty, if I'd like to see policemen at political meetings and have my letters opened, and to have everything controlled. 'Well,' I says, 'everything is; wouldn't make much difference if Kaiser Bill did it instead of Lloyd-George. And I don't go to political meetings, and I don't get

letters once in a blue moon. What we want is less people to flap their mouths and more people to let us be.' "

"You're right there," said Brough. "It'll be all right after the war. They won't go on controlling; country won't stand it. Labourers won't hear much more about that twenty-five bob a week after the war. You'll always get the old men cheap, they're good enough for a day's work till they're seventy. And there's lots of men coming back with only one leg. You'll get those cheap because they'll have pensions. Stands to reason."

"Ah, well," said Hart, "eighty-seven pound ten."

Farmer Brough knitted his brows, with an air of sublime concession said: "Oh, all right, have it your own way. But mind you, you've got to cart it to my place."

Then the debate began all over again.

VII

THE maid announced Mr. and Mrs. March. Automatically nervous, Sylvia, who was sprawling in an armchair and showing too much leg, leapt to her feet, but Captain Orton still lounged against the mantelpiece. The old couple, as they came in, radiated disapproval. They shook hands without a word, bowed stiffly when Sylvia introduced Orton. Sylvia asked if they had had a good journey. They said: "Yes." Then whether they had recently heard from Oliver. Mrs. March said "No." Mr. March was about sixty, dressed in a countrified frock coat, and wore glacé kid boots. His wife was much younger, very thin, very tall, rather like Oliver, had been pretty once upon a time. Now her tight-drawn fair hair was streaked with grey, and insufficiently brushed. They were dry, shy, meanly hostile, typical gentlefolk from a little town. Almost at once Orton grew conscious of

their disapproval. The old man stared at him as if he wondered what the devil he was doing there, while Mrs. March looked about the drawing-room overfilled with little tables loaded with silver ornaments and china pigs, at the couches that looked too soft. She was excited, for she was a pure woman, and flats felt rather impure. Sylvia, too, was impure. It was delicious.

Orton shook hands hurriedly, mumbled that he had a pressing engagement, and went. As the door closed the old people stared at Sylvia as if saying: "Now." Sylvia was impelled to apologise:

"Captain Orton is such a nice man. He's a great pal of Oliver's. He's on short leave and was giving me news of him."

"Is he well?" said Mrs. March.

"Captain Orton cannot have realised who we were," said Mr. March, "or he would have given us news of Oliver."

"No," said Sylvia confusedly. "He was in a hurry, you see." She was telling the truth. There was nothing between her and Orton, but the old couple thrust guilt upon her.

"I must say it is very strange," said Mr. March, "but let that pass."

Nothing was said for a moment. "This is awful," thought Sylvia. They were still scheduling her possessions. Then Mrs. March said:

"I'm sorry we couldn't ask you down, but we're so short of servants." They exchanged two or three grievances against servants, and silence fell again. Sylvia felt that Mrs. March was not telling the truth, that the idea of having her down, "the woman who had ruined their son", and of exposing her to the gossip of their friends, was horrible to them. They had come to inspect

her. "Well, let them," she thought defiantly; then she reacted. After all Mr. March was a man, and instinctively she wanted to charm him.

"I'm so glad to see you," she said, "I wanted to know Oliver's people."

"It is indeed necessary," said Mr. March. "How long did you know Oliver before — before what happened?"

"For a year."

"It is not a very long time."

"Oh, in war time, you know, things move quickly."

"As you say, Mrs. Jervaulx. I suppose that you are called Mrs. Jervaulx?"

"Yes, of course, until — well, anyhow it doesn't matter."

"No," said Mrs. March, "of course it doesn't." As she perceived that heat was arising she obeyed her Victorian tradition and changed the subject. "That's Oliver's photograph you've got on the mantelpiece. I don't seem to know it."

Mr. March got up to look. "It's a new one," he said. "It seems to me strange that Oliver should not have sent us one."

"I had it taken," said Sylvia hurriedly, "only six. And I've kept them all so as to have one in each room. I'm so fond of him," she added, speaking at random.

Mrs. March looked at her more kindly, but her husband still stood by the mantelpiece. "And who are these other young men in khaki?" he asked.

"That's my brother Stephen. He's been wounded."

"Oh. And this one?"

"Oh, that — that's just a friend. And that's Bobbie Marchmont, my cousin. He was killed."

"And what about the others?"

"Oh, they're friends."

"You seem to have a great many friends."

A blush of anger rose in Sylvia's cheeks. Hadn't she a right to friends?

"Yes, I have," she said. "And why not?"

"I should have thought that in your position you would be careful in the selection of your friends."

"May I ask what you have against them?"

"Charles, please . . ."

"No, Emily, please, let me get a word in. I should have thought that at least until the scandal had blown over you would not care to exhibit so many acquaintances, young men, and so forth."

"Mr. March, surely you don't suggest that I'm not to see anybody."

"Not in the least. I suppose you have a family."

"One doesn't live on the top of one's family."

"One would escape many perils if one did, many perils — and many scandals."

Sylvia jumped up, and despite a protesting gesture from Mrs. March cried: "But, look here! What have I done? Have you only come here to be nasty to me?"

"We've come here to form an idea of the lady whom Oliver wishes to marry."

"I'm afraid it's not a very favourable idea."

"Oh, we don't say that," replied Mrs. March.

"Emily, don't interrupt. I don't say we've formed an unfavourable idea, but let me say that we arrived here punctually, by appointment, and we find you in the company of a young man . . ."

"But he'd only dropped in to tell me . . ."

"That is as it may be," said Mr. March. "I make no charge against you, but I think it's most unfortunate in your position. In your position it seems to me that one should be particularly careful not to give an oppor-

tunity to gossip. Apparently you do not realise your position."

"My position!" cried Sylvia. "Oh, I'm not defending myself, but really I can't shut myself up in a flat until Oliver can marry me, and that can't be for some months."

"Certainly not. As you say, you need not shut yourself up until we've considered whether our son shall marry you."

"Considered?" said Sylvia. "How do you mean, considered?"

"Well, of course we've to consider the question."

"But I thought — but really — Oliver himself — it's not only that he wants to do the decent thing."

"We're not talking of the decent thing," said Mr. March. "That term means nothing. Some deeds are righteous and some unrighteous."

Sylvia stared. She felt numb. He went on:

"You must not be surprised that if we find you in compromising circumstances, — please, please allow me to speak, — in compromising circumstances, surrounded by all the evidence of a frivolous way of life, you must not be surprised that we should hesitate."

Then Sylvia lost her temper. "If you've only come here to insult me," she said, "you've done it; you'd better go before we quarrel."

Mrs. March rose as if to intervene, but the duel was joined.

"We may not meet again," said Mr. March. "I do not want to do anything rash, but I do not at present feel inclined to allow my son to marry you."

"I'm not asking for your consent. I don't think I'll marry him however much he wants me to."

"That might be very satisfactory."

"Do you think I'm going to be insulted and bullied? Certainly I'm not going to marry him if he feels as you do."

"Oh, of course, Oliver would want to atone for the wrong he has done," said Mrs. March.

"Is that how he feels?" said Sylvia, in a low voice. "Well, if it's like that, I'm going to write to him now, and tell him I've done with him. I'm not going to be treated like an outcast, a leper. I think you're horrid, both of you. You're hard and you're sanctimonious."

"Emily, let us go."

"Hard and sanctimonious. You don't know what love is, either of you. Or if you do you've been cunning enough not to get found out."

"Good afternoon."

She was alone. Almost at once her exasperation turned to fear. So that was the end of it. What was she going to do? In another three months the decree would be made absolute. She would no longer be Mrs. Jervaulx, but Mrs. Sylvia Jervaulx. Skulk in a flat on an allowance, and take tea in boarding-houses with the wives of cinema managers and Serbian countesses. Or go back to Knapenden. No, not that. Never. She thought of going on the stage. Or she might start a lady barbers' shop. Knapenden! No, never. "I'd rather go on the streets," she thought. Then she cried for nearly an hour, and a longing for her mother, who was like her, who would understand her, overcame her. She would run down next morning and ask her what to do.

VIII

"How much longer is it going on?" asked Ethel Cradoc.

"What going on?"

"This going to jail, and coming out, and going back."

"I don't know." Cradoc said this as he might have said: "I don't care." He felt too weak to argue. But Ethel was obstinate.

"How long do you expect to be out this time?"

"I don't know. Perhaps they'll let me alone. Perhaps the war will stop."

"It ain't good for the shop," said Ethel. She gave brief news of trade. Evidently the business was going to survive, for Lady Oakley's boycott had never been completely effective, and during the first few months Ethel had managed by using a portion of their savings. Then, by degrees, the villagers, who preferred conscientious bacon which they could select to loyal bacon chosen by the Rye butcher, had recovered their ration books and begun to come in in the evening, when nobody from the Place was likely to know; later they sent their children during the day, reserving themselves as a way of escape to say that they didn't know Mary Ellen had gone to the shop. Villa-Land, being middle class, went in more hotly for patriotic purchase, and for a long time had supported Lady Oakley's enterprise, but two of the Rye carriers having been called up, Mr. Martin got so much work that groceries arrived later and later, sometimes not at all. So Villa-Land had to run out for minor supplies, bought under protest, but still bought. At last Mr. Martin made so much money that he decided he was getting old, and that Knapenden was off his beat, whereupon Villa-Land, filled with shame, but cheered by economy, registered for sugar and bacon at the conscientious shop. Only Knapenden Place and a few of the rich residents of Villa-Land refused to deal, and had weekly parcels down from London stores.

Cradoc listened without a smile. A year ago this would have filled him with ironic amusement, but he was too tired to care much whether the business did well or not. He had been forcibly fed again; once more he had known the prison infirmary, and had been discharged with a half-expressed recommendation from the governor to go to the devil, or commit suicide, or something. He left the jail, his head bent under the weight of his hopelessness, for his agony must last through the war, and there seemed no end to it. People had been kind to him in the infirmary; every day the newspaper had been smuggled in. He knew all about the German offensive, knew that through the previous month, and through this one, April, the Allies had been cracking under the German onrush. He had wondered whether this would end the war; he had ceased to hope for an equitable discussion, had come to understand that only complete defeat of one side could end it. "Well, let it be England and be done." He hoped nothing of the future; the winners would grow more arrogant, more militarist; the losers would sulk and plot revenge. Even labour seemed false, divided; some sections, such as the seamen, were even ready to impede the Labour Party; labour was in chaos; some leaders wanted the social revolution, and others wore khaki; some unions followed their officials, and some struck against their own secretaries; the men made bargains, which he thought foolish, and broke them, which he thought wrong; the masters made bargains, which he thought crafty, and broke them, which he thought natural. Even he could no longer find his way in the sectional welter of minor labour parties.

Was it to be hoped that these parties who fought each other could coöperate to combat hatred? He was too weak to argue. In the train from Robertsbridge he had

sat with a fat, angry corn broker who had once been overcharged in a Cologne hotel. All the way the man had raved, pointing a stubby hand with a diamond ring on it; he had clamoured: "Intern them all, intern Germans, intern naturalised Germans, intern fathers of Germans who had enlisted, intern the women who had disgraced themselves by marrying Germans, intern the English children of the accursed race. And no more German prisoners should be driven to their work in lorries; no more jam for the Huns; no more leave to internees to go and attend to their businesses and take the bread out of our mouths. Denaturalise the swine. Make all the Schweinsteins resume their names. Get them out of the Government offices. Shoot the Swiss . . ."

Cradoc had said hardly anything. He realised that if one made war one must make it like this; he reflected that if he were Home Secretary he would do all these things, and that a pacifist turned warrior must be terrible because logical. But it sickened him, because he understood that this fermenting hate must stay within men, raise the bitter bread of future wars, that out of the war would arise a sham league of nations, sham because all would retain their arms, because it would be an umbrella for alliances. He was too weak to argue. He was too weak to want anything but rest and silence. When, that night, he went to Ascalon Farm, sometimes stopping to rest, he was prepared to be insulted by Hart, to be turned out. But he was not even surprised to find them cordial. Molly kissed him before her parents; Mrs. Hart smiled up from her knitting. And Hart was almost admiring.

"They can say what they like," he remarked, "you've got some spirit. Not, mind you, that I think you're

right. Still . . ." His curiosity awoke. "How far up your nose did they push those tubes?"

Cradoc realised that to them his career was rather dramatic; he was not to them a respectable person, but, like a cinema burglar, he was an attractive one. He gave them only brief accounts of his prison experience. At last Hart winked. "It's time we were getting to bed, mother. You can lock up, Molly, by and by."

As soon as they were alone Molly Hart grew archly absorbed in her sewing, and for some time Cradoc said nothing. It was like a dream to see her sitting there, with the light making a golden patch on her chestnut head. Yes, she was rest. Once upon a time she had been feverish excitement. Now she was all sweet calm, and he needed it. He said: "Going to marry me soon, Molly?"

"If you like."

"Then let's get married as soon as we can."

"All right. Shall I put up the banns if you aren't friendly with Mr. Denny?"

Cradoc did not reply for a moment. A year before he would have fought to the end against being married in church, but now he felt past that. Let them mumble. "Well," he said, "perhaps it's better you should see to it, though Mr. Denny's the only one who gave me a nod to-day. The others are still a bit frightened of the Place; so's he, of course, but he's more frightened of seeming frightened." Then he grasped the girl by the arm, and throwing himself upon his knees rested his head on the broad, soft breast. Molly's arms closed around his thin shoulders. How weak and ill he looked! Never before had she wholly loved him.

IX

When Sylvia arrived in the afternoon, and in a single, breathless sentence confided to her mother what had happened, Lady Oakley did not say much. She was as wise when people expressed their sentimental agonies as she was rough and tactless when their preoccupations grew intellectual. She merely said: "Not marry him? Nonsense. We'll talk about it later. We'll see your father after dinner to-night." For Lady Oakley believed that her husband, who never cared what he ate, and never took more than half a glass of port, was like the man of fiction, replete and slightly drunk after dinner, therefore amiable. "Lie down and have a rest," she added. "You need it. You've got a red nose and swollen eyes. And don't talk to Monica; she's always mooning about."

So, Sylvia having rested, and Monica having tired herself out in a long, aimless walk, dinner passed off well. Lady Oakley, who was still unable to understand her husband's attitude toward the war, had learnt that the war generally produced bad temper; she had learnt this as a dog comes to understand that when a man puts on his hat it means a walk. So she avoided the war, and beyond an outburst brought about by botulism, the latest fashionable disease, which, she declared, had been introduced by Hun germs, all was amity and peace. As soon as Sir Hugh went to his study she left the drawing-room, followed by Sylvia, telling Monica not to come into her father's study for a little while.

They found Sir Hugh at his desk with a pile of little books and socialist newspapers which he had bought from the Bomb Shop in Charing Cross Road. On the corner of his desk sat as usual Kallikrates, golden, blinking,

superior. Lady Oakley ignored the objectionable creature, and at once attacked her subject.

"Hugh," she said, "Mr. and Mrs. March came to see Sylvia yesterday. I'm afraid they didn't get on."

"Oh? It's the first time you've seen them, Sylvia?"

"Yes, father, and I'm afraid it's the last. They didn't like me. And I didn't like them. Oh, they're horrid, horrid."

"Tell your father what happened," said Lady Oakley.

Sylvia gave an incoherent account of the interview, summed up the old people: "They're narrow, they're hard, they don't like me, they think I'm a fast woman."

"Don't talk like that, Sylvia," said Sir Hugh angrily. It irritated him that Sylvia should use such words. And in a way they were true.

"Well, that's what they think, father. Just because Captain Orton was there, and because I'd Stephen's photo on my mantelpiece. But that's not why. They weren't going to like me. They hated me before they saw me. And I'm not going to have people talking about my position, and I won't have them considering my position. I won't marry him. If they begged me to marry him, I wouldn't do it."

"Nonsense," said Lady Oakley, "you've got to marry him."

"I won't marry him," said Sylvia weakly.

"Don't be silly. Hugh, tell her not to be a fool. Of course she's got to marry him."

"It seems to me," said Sir Hugh, "that it's for the boy to say."

"He doesn't matter," said Lady Oakley.

"Oh," said Sir Hugh. "Then why do you want her to marry a feeble young man like that?"

"He's not feeble," said Sylvia, defending her property.

"Oh," cried Lady Oakley, "what does it matter what he is? All we've got to think about is how to get you out of this mess."

Then Sylvia stamped, and Kallikrates stood up, his fur bristling with apprehension. "I won't be talked to like that. I won't have everybody talking about my position, and saying I'm in a mess. You're as bad as his people. I won't have it. I'll go away. I'll go on the stage."

"Sylvia, don't be a fool. You know quite well there's only one way out and that's to marry him."

"I don't see it at all," said Sir Hugh, seizing Kallikrates who was preparing to leap off the desk.

"But whatever else is she to do?" cried Lady Oakley, exasperated.

"She can — now, Kalli, don't be cross," said Sir Hugh, in whose arms the cat was struggling — "she can come back here."

"How can you talk such nonsense? How can she come back here? She won't be able to go anywhere."

"Well, why should she throw herself away? There, there, Kalli, there's a good cat. There, sit down nicely."

"Oh, do let that cat alone; this is serious. Do be practical for a moment. Sylvia can't shut herself up here. It's no use; she's made a fool of herself. What we've got to do is to cover it up. Are you prepared to have her shut herself up here — going nowhere — having to be sent upstairs when people call? Do you want people to refuse invitations to tennis parties in case they might meet Sylvia?"

"Don't, mother, don't."

"It's no use saying 'don't.' That's what's going to happen. Your father's trying to make you into a scandal, just because he lives in the clouds. But it shan't be,

it shan't be. There's only one thing to be done: you must marry him."

"I'm afraid they won't allow him anything," said Sylvia, miserably.

"Well, then, we must. Hugh, you must allow them five hundred a year and find him something to do when the war's over."

"How am I to find anything for a young weakling like that?"

"Never mind the weakling. What's the good of your having influence if you don't use it?"

Sir Hugh stared at Kallikrates, who was growing accustomed to this passionate conversation, and now stared at the humans with an air of mild surprise. "Sylvia," he said at last, "what do you want to do?"

"Father," her voice was unsteady with tears, "I don't know. I expect mother's right."

"Well, then," said Sir Hugh, "we must see what can be done. Sylvia!" he cried out, "darling, don't cry, please don't cry."

"Oh, go to bed," snapped Lady Oakley, "and have some Benger's."

Sylvia went out; she was sobbing loudly.

"Hugh," said Lady Oakley, "that settles that. Now what about Stephen?"

"Has Stephen done anything?" said Sir Hugh apprehensively.

"Not that I know of, but he wants to marry Louise."

"What? When did he tell you that?"

Lady Oakley smiled. "He didn't tell me. He doesn't know himself. Of course you're blind, like most men. He's always with her. He's a different man when she's here. When he began to brood at tea, the other day, and to sing that awful song, you know: 'Oh, my, I don't

want to die', it was she pulled him round. Well? Aren't you glad?"

"I don't know," said Sir Hugh.

"How do you mean, you don't know? I suppose you have no objection to Louise?"

"Louise!" said Sir Hugh softly, "no, of course not. Only Stephen's such a crock."

"All the more reason for him to marry some one who'll look after him."

"Louise might do better than that," said Sir Hugh after a moment. "Looking after a man . . ."

"Oh! dear, oh! dear!" said Lady Oakley wearily. "You're perfectly impossible. I simply don't know what you mean."

"It's not very romantic for her," said Sir Hugh. While Lady Oakley stared, his mind rapidly evoked his courtship of Mrs. Douglas. Must her child, his dream child, be turned into a nurse. "I don't want her sacrificed," he said.

"Sacrificed!" gasped Lady Oakley. "How much longer is this nonsense going on? You call it sacrifice for her to marry — my son. I'd like to know what you've got against Stephen. He's getting better, he's clever, I suppose — oh, this is ridiculous. She'll do nicely."

Do nicely! Louise do nicely!

Lady Oakley was still talking: "I think she's a very lucky girl. Perhaps you've forgotten she's twenty-seven, and in these days a girl of that age hasn't much chance of marriage. I wish I hadn't told you."

"I don't want her sacrificed to clean up the mess of this war."

"We're not talking about the war." Lady Oakley gazed at Kallikrates, who had now folded his paws, and rested upon his master an entirely blank gaze. "I can't

understand you. If Stephen had lost both arms and both legs, and both eyes, if he were off his head — well, even then, somebody would have to look after him. You and I can't live forever. Monica may marry. Somebody must look after him. You may not care what happens to your son, but I do."

"Oh, well," said Sir Hugh wearily, "we'll see. Now let me alone, Lena. I want to think."

For a long time Sir Hugh rested his chin upon one hand, holding out the other towards Kallikrates, who took no notice at all. The cat was resentful; there had been too much noise that night. Sir Hugh tried to find his way through perplexities. How tangled up people were: Stephen crocked, Sylvia about to be tied to a worthless young man; Monica afflicted by some secret sorrow; and now Louise, truest daughter of them all, to be thrown away. The war, always the war, maiming some, killing others, remoulding lives to suit its brutal aims, patching, so as to make more young life, to have more young life in twenty years to use and to mar. He saw himself an unpractical idealist. What was the good of standing out against Sylvia's marriage — or Louise's marriage? What was the good of sentencing these young people gone astray to a solitude which would not be happy? He must give in. One could not create ideal lives in an unideal world. One must do what one could. He buried his face in his hands. He was unhappy because he saw life clearly, and yet could not command it. Still Kallikrates stared at him, the black lunes of his eyes broad with enquiry, without partisanship. He observed that the man looked depressed. He registered this as a fact. As the man did not move, Kallikrates lost even that intellectual interest. A vast indifference flooded him. He felt lofty and detached as a god upon his mountain. Languor invaded

him; his eyelids slowly drooped over the moist gold of his eyes. His eyes closed. Kallikrates was no longer a citizen of a warring world. He floated in the ether of his abstraction. He was not asleep; he was dematerialised. Little by little a purr of contentment rose from his body, free from all passion and all responsibility.

X

Monica idly examined her uncle's library. It was not a large one, and it was very like him. Set in a large Sheraton cabinet were a great number of novels, some by Mrs. Humphry Ward, a good many by Mr. E. F. Benson, and a wilderness of Elinor Glyns and Victoria Crosses. She found the memoirs of Mr. Justice Hawkins, travels in somethingistan, Night Life in London, and a great treatise on the tracking of the wily gazelle. The lower shelf was occupied by a complete library edition of George Meredith. Monica took out "The Egoist", found it dusty and uncut, and as she used the paper knife agreed that her uncle's promise of a dull time was being realised. Her short stay had not been enlivened by the usual London pleasures; now restaurants came at half-past nine under the hand of a law which forbade hot meals, while theatres sent their patrons to bed at half-past ten. It felt very funny to bring one's sugar to the Ritz to tea. And Genevieve was no solace; she was intolerably pleased with being Mrs. Drayton, having a father who controlled the drugs, and a husband who controlled the Controller; she hinted that her own home control was still more lofty. Monica thought of these things because she was nervous, because she had to see Hurn. What was she going to say to him? What might she not have said if she had not met Frank Cottenham? "I don't know," she thought,

"I was so different then." Then the bell rang and she grew defensive.

Hurn had not changed much, except that his face was thinner, his look more intense. He was handsome in a tortured way. He, too, was nervous, for he dropped her hand almost as soon as he grasped it. Then, hurriedly, they began to talk. They spoke of the war, which in that month of June was going worse and worse.

"I wish I hadn't taken leave," said Hurn, "even though it was only four days. Every moment one feels we may go pop. We just saved it at Amiens; we half saved it at Ypres; now they're bursting in on the South — Paris may go. God knows what's going to happen." He paced the room agitatedly. "I must get back to-night. I can't believe we're going to be licked."

"But surely you don't think that?"

"I don't know, I don't understand! It's incredible. If it hadn't been for Byng at Arras we were done. And yet, we go on cracking — nearly. Are we going to crack for good? Laugh at me if you like, but many a night I've knelt in my dug-out and prayed."

Monica was shocked. In her class one prayed in church, on Sundays. So she bravely cribbed from Mr. Harold Begbie:

"They say the war has brought about a spiritual revival."

"Yes," said the young man grudgingly, "sometimes I think so. Yes, perhaps. You wouldn't believe it, the most hardened sinners go down on their marrow bones before going over the top. Some people call it fire insurance, but I'm not so sure. You know, when you're out there, with the eternal stars over your head in a sky black and deep as hell, all alone because you can't see your fellows, and nobody by your side except death, you

can't help believing. It would be too hideous not to. A world as horrible as this must be balanced by a better one; without that it would topple over. And men who that morning were playing chess with you are lying out in No Man's Land, stiff in their blood. I can't believe they're still there. It's only their shadow that's lying tied in knots. One of our crowd started shouting out one night across the wire: 'Bertie! I say, Bertie, old bean! How are things up there? What? Not so bad. Heaven's just topping? Yes, dear old thing, I hear. What's that? You say you've booked a pew for me. Right, oh! I shan't be long.' They said he was mad."

Monica looked at him with dilated eyes. Mad! Was Hurn mad too? He terrified her, so again she became commonplace. "Oh," she said lightly. "Of course some people think that one can talk to spirits. I suppose you've read 'Raymond'?"

Hurn stared at her as if thinking of something else: "'Raymond,'" he said, vaguely. "Yes. I skimmed through it the other day. It may be true." He drew his hand across his forehead. "How can one tell? Who cares whether this war is bringing us a purer and simpler domestic life? Or barbarism? Or whether indeed Johannes is right and this is Armageddon, with Judgment Day before recess? We're alive. Can't we take something while we're alive?" With a precipitancy that shook her he added: "Monica, will you marry me?"

Still she stared at him. He frightened her, and yet, she abominably pitied him. She wanted to say "yes", and "no." "No" because of all the glamourous past; "yes" because he was like a lost dog. So she temporised: "I don't know."

The young man bent forward, clasping his knees. "You don't know," he said. "No, I suppose you don't. And

yet so much as I can love anything, I love you. I've always dreamed of you. You've always been with me out there. I don't know if I believe in hell, but if I do I'd be damned for your sake."

"Don't," said Monica. "You frighten me."

"Sorry. I can't help feeling like that. But won't you answer me?"

"Don't make me. I'm so afraid of life."

He leapt to his feet. "Monica, I won't say any more. I don't want to talk about these things. Let me go; I don't think you'll forget me, and if I come back I'll ask you again."

Monica detained his hand. "Don't think hardly of me. I don't pretend that I didn't know you cared for me, but nowadays things aren't easy. One gets frightened of life. Write to me. I like your letters." Then as he bent to kiss her hand, for a moment she caressed his harsh black hair. How feverish were his lips!

She thought about him often that afternoon, as she shopped with Genevieve. Hurn formed a strange background, so ravaged and uncertain, to the smug activities of western London. She went with her cousin to buy tortoise-shell fittings, sweets; a splendid non-coupon entrée was supplied by Gunter; they went to two milliners and one dressmaker; Monica herself spent an hour over her new evening frock and afternoon dress which even the war season made necessary. All through she was conscious of artifice; by her side, as by Hurn's, went death, and all men seemed ghosts.

Her impression was strengthened that night at the little dinner given in her honour. Just Sir Angus, Genevieve, a rather sparkling Frenchman, called Cadoresse, Lord Arthur Horton, convalescent now, and his young wife, pretty, but like a hard-mouthed mare. Everybody

thought that General Maurice ought to be court-martialled for having attacked Lloyd-George.

"Who cares," said Sir Angus, "whether it was true or not that Lloyd-George thinned the front? What's done is done. And who cares whether those mixed divisions in Palestine contained ninety-five per cent. white men or only ten? In war time there's only one thing to be done, to hold one's tongue and get a move on. He ought to be court-martialled."

"Oh, well," said Cadoresse, "he's been made military critic of the *Daily News*. You don't want to punish the chap any more."

The party raved at the *Daily News*, including Sir Angus, who said:

"I never read the rag, but I know it ought to be closed down."

"What has the *Daily News* done?" asked Monica, for Cottenham read it every day, so she felt affection for it.

The whole party answered together: It was a pro-German, a pacifist paper, a lose-the-war paper. The editor was a pro-German. The editor had been a pro-Boer. The editor had been a pro-Russian in '54. He'd backed up Napoleon. The *Daily News* wasn't formed in the days of Napoleon? Oh, well, he *would* have backed up Napoleon. Anyhow he was backing up the Sinn Feiners.

"Shoot 'em," said Lord Arthur amiably. "It's much simpler than trying 'em. We don't try Huns."

Monica was heard to murmur that they ought not to be interned without trial.

"You forget," said Cadoresse, "that if we tried 'em we might have to let 'em go. It's just a case of benefit of the doubt, and in war time one has to keep that for oneself." Then he reflected that Monica was very pretty, and coming closer began to talk of love.

She liked him, his dark eyes, his trim moustache, his way of being serious about trifles and light about serious things. He reminded her of Cottenham, and he touched her hand when he offered her the salted almonds.

Meanwhile the others were finishing their discussion of the Man Power Bill. "Rope 'em all in," said Sir Angus. "There are plenty of fit men up to fifty-one. They'll be roping me in next. I'll have to see about getting a brass hat. That is if they'll let me leave my job. Not very likely, with things in the state they are."

They talked of labour unrest, and Sir Angus became vastly confidential; he knew of strikes, of strikes nipped in the bud in committee rooms by the production of calling-up notices, strikes magnificently settled by Asquith and Lloyd-George, settled on terms which the strikers thought excellent until they came to understand them. It did not occur to him that strikers struck again only because their rulers deceived them. "Still," he said, more seriously, "we shan't be able to fox 'em for ever. Too much Bolshevism about. And the hidden hand's at work. I don't know what our people are up to: *John Bull* has just published a list of Germans naturalised since the war. Simply awful. And even in '16 we naturalised crowds of them. We's just asking for it. We let Princess Loewenstein Wertheimer register under a false name and address — and then renaturalise. We let her visit Huns in internment camps, like Mrs. Leverton Harris — and nothing happens. We keep Speyer and Cassel on the Privy Council — we're swarming with Germans and Bolsheviks. Then we're surprised when labour's restless. It'll end in a grand bust up."

"Oh," said Lord Arthur, "aren't you laying it on a bit thick? Of course a war like this is bound to get people's rag out, but they'll settle down all right, and the jolly old

world'll toddle along as usual. The real trouble is the beer. Somebody the other day laid me an even fiver that I wouldn't drink a pint. I did, but I wouldn't do it again if you laid me ten to one in War Saving Certificates."

As Monica smiled Cadoresse whispered to her: "That young man's a Bourbon; he has learnt nothing and forgotten everything. Your ear is like a rosy shell; one would like to listen in it and hear the murmur of your soul."

The others were not listening. They had found a subject for hot debate. Was it a pity that the Air Force had assumed the blue Hungarian uniform? Was the old khaki better? Some thought the khaki burlesque, with its military colour and its naval cut. Fancy uniforms for the Air Force were designed: pink ruffles and birds of paradise for the hat secured favour. Lord Arthur summed up: "Anyhow, it's all very well raggin', but the latest is just about as near a naval uniform as can be. I call that a naval victory."

XI

It seemed natural to see him standing there, outside Prince's, his blue eyes looking out over the traffic of Piccadilly into some realm of his own, where moved purely intellectual ideas round facts which to others were passionate in significance. As Monica drew closer, the old thrill lived again; his rather short, rather square shape contented her, his neat elegance, and the dear crispness of his short brown hair on his neck. No, she couldn't bear it, and looked distractedly at the slow-moving omnibuses and motor cars. She couldn't cross the road. She stopped for a second, then went on. She couldn't stop

there in Piccadilly until he went away. So she went on: it was characteristic of Monica that it did not occur to her to turn back. She went no further in cowardice than to hope he would not see her pass. But, and he did not seem surprised, their eyes met as she drew abreast. She stopped. He took off his hat. They shook hands. Marvellously they were walking westward, side by side. After a time he said:

"How are you?"

"I'm all right, thanks." Then: "Are you staying in town long?"

"No, only to-day. I've got a conference at five and must get back after dinner."

Monica smiled to herself. "After dinner! I wonder whether Julia believes that." She felt humorous and hard.

"I suppose," he said, "you're up for the season, what there's left of it."

"No, I shan't be here long either. My father will be up to-morrow or the day after, and we're going back to Knapenden this week."

He was uneasy. He threw her a sideways glance. How adorable was her thin gracefulness. Her open coat showed a blouse pale cinnamon in colour. So tender and so white. "Look out!" cried the familiar in his heart. "Be light. Talk of anything. Talk of her people. Frank, old chap, talk, and at the next tube station dive." So Cottenham said:

"I suppose you miss your father up here. You're very fond of him, aren't you? He matters more to you than your mother."

"Yes, I suppose so." Monica grew reflective, and it did not surprise her to find herself easily confidential. One was — with him. "Mother," she said, "you see, mother

doesn't take the war off one. She's so imperial. The other day I came across Kipling's dream, in a story called 'His Private Honour.' His idea is a special territorial army for India, enlisted for twelve years, allowed to marry, so that their children may yield more white soldiers. And then a larger army to colonise India, to hire warships from us to guard Aden and Singapore — a sort of vision of India paying interest on her loans, colonising and manufacturing, making empire — empire for empire's sake. Mother's like that, weapons — it's rather hard to live with when one feels different."

He nodded. "Yes, I understand. It's a metallic world we're making. I see the metal turned every day into machines. The metal is getting into our system. We're the slaves of metal, gold, and steel — gold with which to buy steel, steel with which to steal gold. And it's spreading. Every bureaucrat tries to be a man of steel; mostly he's a man of pig-iron. Still metal. Talk about efficiency, and dress up political theft as the necessity of the situation. The times that are coming will be much the same, but more so. If we win this war we'll want to maintain the qualities that won it: ruthlessness, organization, business capacity; and if we lose we'll want to acquire those qualities to get our revenge. New gods, godgetit, godgrabit, goddoemdown. What a pantheon! No room for Aphrodite and her inexpensive mirror of the sea."

She listened. She did not love him, she had never loved him. Not entirely, because he had not loved her. But she liked his words. After a time they grew silent and did not speak again until instinctively they turned into St. James Park. Then, irrelevantly, he said:

"I taught you to feel."

"Yes," said Monica, "it's no good to me. I'm glad

you did. I haven't hated you. But what's the good? You said we'd come to a blind alley. And you talk as if all the world had done so too."

"Perhaps it has. Perhaps this war, all this desire for conquest, all this struggling for the right, is producing only another world the same as the old one. Same hate, same love, same material desires, same vain spiritual aspirations. Pushing frontier posts about, and the same rivers flowing unperturbed under new flags. Striving and killing, just to push along a road without an end, a blind alley right enough." They walked on silently. They were not unhappy; round them London June burnt radiant; couples lay embraced upon the grass. An exquisite melancholy ran through both. Both wondered whether things could become as they had been, and both knew they never had been. That hurt, and Monica found her eyes wet. He touched her arm, but she shook him off. She blinked her eyes free of tears. Here was Hyde Park Corner. One couldn't cry at Hyde Park Corner.

"Monica," said Cottenham, bravely holding out his hand and for a moment pressing hers, "it's very hard. We couldn't get enough out of life, you and I. Life is a bad debtor. You mustn't expect her to pay in full. If you're lucky she may compound with you and pay part of her debt on the instalment plan. But it's no use pressing her; if you do she'll file her petition in bankruptcy. She's a cynic."

A newsboy passed the Park gate. As he ran he shouted: "Germans on the Marne! Germans on the Marne!"

"I expect Paris will fall," said Cottenham, as he took off his hat.

He was gone. Monica tried in vain to understand what made her so unhappy.

XII

The news seemed to Sir Hugh less horrible than incredible. Ever since the end of March he had watched the Allied line bend, believing and refusing to believe that it would break. It had not broken, and every time hope had risen again. Every time the Germans drove in the Allies, and then stopped, he thought: "This is the last time." Then, as always, we bent and bent. He ceased to care: that was the course of the war; we must bend. And we could not react. He no longer thought of counter-offensives; he had come, like a child that has been beaten, to wait for the next blow. Now they were on the Marne, they were over the Marne, and that river was to him historic, so once again fear and anxiety overwhelmed his growing indifference. He wondered whether this were the end, whether those grey legions would at last swarm westwards, take Paris, bring down the shining edifice of British ambition. His mind was in a state of rout. It served little that the Austrians were broken on the Piave; he could see only what was close, hear the sound of no guns other than those whose voices now and then rumbled across Udimore Down. We were being beaten, and by an enemy without mercy, without cleanness of object; here was Hertling, not even pretending that Germany would build a world richer in justice and freer of strife; and Sir Hugh knew quite well that our own ruling class despised and denied Wilson's ideal, that they hated the League of Nations, that they would almost rather have a peace of violence made at their expense than abandon the chance of themselves making a peace of violence. All those people, generals, financiers, politicians, — they were like his wife and knew no argument save force. The Germans, of whom a year before he had hoped something,

a stable settlement, had, the first hint of victory, thrown away their resounding principles, knelt on prostrate Russia and picked her pockets. Now they were winning, and the Germans had not the decency even to be hypocrites; once again their newspapers were filled with the lustful cries of pan-Germanism; once again they talked of annexing (in the new, canting, purely commercial way) Belgium and Northern France, colonies the world over, of punitive indemnities destined to make of the Allies vassals or beggared conquests.

His mind took a turn. And what of us? Were we any better morally — who were inferior intellectually? Had we shown a sign of sympathy with liberty? Had we not left the young Russia of Kerensky to struggle against the Germans in her poverty and chaos? Had we not refused to state our war aims? Had we not favoured Korniloff, a reactionary general? Kaledin, a reactionary general? Favoured anybody who was against the new socialist democracy, deserted anybody whom our Tory journals chose to libel? Had we not ground the face of Russian labour as we tried to grind our own? Had we not used to the fullest of our meanness our power to refuse passports to the labour men — just to prevent labour men from discussing the business of the world and keep them at the under-dog rank? And had we not sent missions into Ukraine to plot, to bribe, to war against those Bolsheviks whose every speech and decree we garbled or suppressed, whose purposes we travestied, to whom we attributed burlesque marriage laws, whom we falsely charged, charged without evidence, with causing bloodshed, those men who after all had maintained some sort of state already for ten months? We had never sent a rifle or a penny to young Russia when she was fighting Germany; now we were ready to send division after division, chests

of gold, cargoes of lyddite to old Russia who was fighting the new — and nearly all our press was yapping and snarling, clamouring for a Japanese invasion of wretched Russia, not only to restore order, that is to restore tyranny, but for the sake of revenge, because we wanted the Bolsheviks to suffer, because men openly said: "Turn the Japs on 'em, they'll show 'em." All that because they had committed the crime of hating war! We wanted revenge.

Sir Hugh saw England living through a terror of the soul. She had thrown over her old chivalric ideas; in the hour of her need she found decency didn't pay, and grew determined to be decent only if it paid. To the sound of her new war cry: À Bolo! à Bolo!" at the behest of the Billings and Bottomleys who crowded her music-halls, her railway carriages and especially her Kensington drawing-rooms, she was asking for the revision of naturalisation certificates, that was for the dishonouring of her notes of hand. The world was upside down; blunt England had made secret treaties; Lloyd-George, ex-Radical, was accepting Protection; the partisans of free labour were establishing an embargo on the right of skilled men to move from firm to firm — they were building a world armed and tariffed, a world which delighted in hostility and hated Wilson, Wilson, the only hope of civilisation, because he wanted to tear their weapons from their bloody hands and unite them in a league of peace that had no respect for the vested interests in slaughter. Yes, in America lay the only hope. They, the youngest children of the world, were not bound close by the bonds of hatred on which the old Empire had been nurtured. No doubt they too had their covetousness, their flaunting Roosevelts, their greedy Rockefellers — but they had moral dreams; they were not the slaves

of cocked hats, orders, epaulets, flags, aiguillettes, the things for which men die. Wilson expressed all that, that desire to establish a stable world, where the individual would be free from the quarrels of State.

As he walked along the Haymarket, the day was still brilliant. The pale, bright sunset of London coloured her in rose. The crowd round him was young; how clean and straight were these young men in khaki and blue! And how the women's eyes shone! A sudden revelation invaded Sir Hugh: people like that, bright young people, they must be the victims of what was happening, they could not be its authors; were there crowds like this in Berlin? Very likely. Then he remembered his few journeys to Germany. No, they were not like that; they were thicker, coarser; they had idealism, but not the quiet, profound emotion of the English, their lovely, ironic lightness, which does not strike deep and bitter as it does in the French. Oh, this England, she was the gigantic nursery of the world, and if all these babies went blundering about, smashing things, banging their heads against corners, and unreasonably yelling about it; if at the sight of any toy they shouted, "mine! mine", and if they grabbed at the other children's toys, and hit them in the eye when they wouldn't hand them over — well, that was the way of children who by and by would grow up into fine men. Suddenly he loved them; he realised that their crimes were born of their innocence. "Oh," he thought, "Billy Bridge was right when he said that in a dog fight one may as well see to it that one's dog wins. Beautiful, sinful England! No, not sinful; beautiful England gone astray like a petulant, selfish maiden, whom Prince Charming has not yet kissed into womanhood; oh, beautiful England who can be so foolish, so hard, so mean, because you are so young, and strong in the desires of

youth, and in whose breast lies buried deep the love of justice, the capacity for mercy, the instinct of comradeship, you have not yet written your history. Beautiful England, you will still break many eggs before you make the omelette of the universe, but I must love you, and love you, because only love, crude minx with a heart of gold, can teach you to love; to make you mine I must first of all become yours."

Sir Hugh did not at once go back to Ashley Gardens. His mood was too elevated. He wanted to embrace the city, to soak himself in her loveliness. He turned into Leicester Square, pleased with the crowd which in comradeship jostled him. He liked the warmth, the familiar contacts. A young couple passed him, close-linked, eyes in eyes; rough New Zealand soldiers, with the beautiful profiles of copper coins, stood serious at a corner; a woman spoke to him:

"Hello, darling — all on your lonesome — oh, sir!"

He looked up. It was Westcott. He did not start. He understood, but all men were ghosts that night. The girl flushed scarlet. She averted her pretty blue eyes. She was delightfully dressed; Sir Hugh carried away a vague picture of waved chestnut hair, a low-cut creamy blouse, a soft white breast, pretty gloved hands that dangled a gold bag. Westcott looked successful rather than wild. He was hardly conscious of her tragedy; it was vaguely he asked whether he could help her in any way.

"Oh, no, sir. Thank you. It's too late. Besides, I'm all right. Thank you." She half put out her hand, then withdrew it as if ashamed. Through her despairing embarrassment, Westcott's professionalism found a way.

"Good-by-ee," she said jauntily, and was gone.

Sir Hugh had almost forgotten her when he reached

the Bomb Shop in Charing Cross Road. An unaccountable affection had grown in him for this shop where a gentle old bookseller, who looked like a moth which during the chrysalis stage had sustained its life on an exclusive diet of abstract thought, dispensed books and newspapers, and all the most audacious ideas. He often spent a long time at the counters, where crowded Shaw, Carpenter, Tchekoff, all the plays and all the poems that have inflamed man, the socialists, the anarchists, the discontented and the hopeful, the sweet idealists, the bitter rebels. To Sir Hugh, in these days, the Bomb Shop was an island of love and hope; there he found the books that are true optimism, for they did not aspire to make the best of an evil world, but to turn it into a better one. Sometimes he talked to the old bookseller, who did not treat him like a customer but like a comrade. That night the bookseller was tying up parcels, and Sir Hugh wanted to talk to him about the destiny of man. The old man listened, busy with paper and string. His lips were young and smiling in his grey beard, his eyes soft. He said:

"What a pity they've built across the way. If it weren't for that we'd have the sunset in the shop every night." He laughed: "Though I don't know if it wouldn't be nicer if the shop faced the other way, because then it's the sunrise would come in."

XIII

THE old pony trotted sulkily along the military road. He hated that road; it hurt his hoofs. As he picked his way, looking for soft places, from time to time tossing his head in that way half bad-tempered, half sportive, that is the charm of his kind, the pony began to form a

profound plan: he would not hurry. He realised that he might not at once be allowed to walk, but having experimented with a decreasingly slow trot, he gently swerved towards the left, where grew nice, soft, smelly turf — the hands on the reins did not seem to mind, and so, more and more slowly, he jogged along, conscious of immense cunning.

Stephen was that morning meditative. By his side sat Louise whom he was driving in from the New Hospital. She had begun with small talk, and, finding him aloof, had responded to his mood. He was grateful, though he did not know it. They were still silent as they crossed the railway and turned up the rise towards the ridge. His eyes roved over the fields that now were stained with flowers, stray bladder-campion, ox-eye daisies; along the ditches tiny red pimpernel, and speedwell, blue and demure. Louise looked away from him, showing no sign of awareness, as if she were basking in the heat of the June day. But no awkwardness lay between them; they had achieved the ideal of companionship, were together, yet not compelled to mutual entertainment.

The pony went slower and slower, sometimes nuzzling his knees with a black, aggrieved muzzle. Now and then he gave a tug at his collar, that said: "Damn this hill." He thought of stopping for a moment, as he caught sight of a stray patch of clover, then decided to stop only at the top. He did so, and without concealment planted his fore feet on the edge of the ditch and began to browse the hanging boughs of the hazels.

Stephen considered for a moment the pony's fat back, then turned to Louise and said:

"Will you marry me?"

Louise did not reply for a moment. She sat as if un-

stirred, her negligent hands closed over a handkerchief. The long black lashes made shadows on the pale skin. Stephen said:

"You don't reply. I'm not surprised. It's cheek of me, I suppose, a crock like me. Oh, I don't mean my leg. But lots of people think I'm a lunatic."

She smiled.

"Perhaps I am a lunatic, but I went out a patriot. You don't mind, do you — I know I say queer things. I've stopped thinking what I used to think at Eton, if that was thinking. No, I know you don't mind. That's just what there is about you, Louise: you never mind. You're above it, like Kallikrates. But you haven't answered me."

"I'm three years older than you are. I'm twenty-seven."

"I'm fifty. Four years of hell, hell . . . "

She laid her hand upon his arm. "Don't talk about it, Stephen; you know it's not good for you."

"Four years of hell," he said again, "and no heaven made out of it. Oh, I'm old enough, don't you worry. Question is whether I'm too old, whether it's fair to ask you to marry me. But then that's nonsense; you're not young or old; you're like the water lilies, with long, old roots and young flowers. You're eternal. And I need you."

The girl hesitated, then put an arm about his shoulders and drew his head down to her breast. Then, in a voice so low that he could hardly hear it, but intense as if she absorbed him into her being, she said: "Yes, Stephen — why, of course — always, always, since we were children." Bending over him, she kissed his cheek, and so stayed until, with masculine restlessness, he turned to clasp her and kiss her lips.

That night, as they sat upon the south terrace, Louise

at first was censorious. "You know, you shouldn't irritate your mother like that. She takes the war hard — oh, not harder than you, but differently."

"What have I done?"

"Well, you shouldn't talk to her at all about the war, to begin with. Think of what you said about the Czecho-Slovaks."

"Let me see, what did I say? One says such a lot of things to mother, just for the fun of it. Oh, yes. Well, what's the harm of my having said that the gallant Czecho-Slovaks had shot more workmen and peasants in Ukraine than the Bolsheviks had shot bourgeois."

"Yes. Why did you say that?"

"It's true."

"What does it matter if it's true if it irritates your mother?"

Stephen laughed. "I say, when we're married, shan't I be able to say true things to you if they irritate you?"

"Oh," said Louise loftily, "*that* sort of thing doesn't irritate me."

"Upon my word," said Stephen, "I believe you're the only one who's escaped the war. Do you read the war news?"

"Well, one has to read the war news."

"But I mean really read. Do you know the difference between Przemysl and chemise?"

"Chemises?" said Louise vaguely. "I wasn't talking about chemises."

Stephen drew his arm tighter about her waist and said: "You're simply ripping. You sit there while half the world is slaughtering itself, and the other half hotting it up to go on, and a few thousand people holding a few thousand committees about it — and they go on shearing the sheep, and Farcet cobbles his boots, while the elder-

tree turns flat, white blossoms to the sun, and you just bloom on. Talk of a tonic! Talk of a sedative! In the middle of a chaos like this, which is not spreading through a mere war, but is affecting ordinary life, you're a sort of chorus, not exactly of optimism but permanency; a pretty chorus to a weeping world. Here are all the ranks of life jumbled up, and you don't get jumbled up. There you are like the Albert Memorial. I wonder what you'll be like in twenty years, when the new generation has been educated in the new way. Education's going to be a grand stunt after the war. We've discovered that though we may have won Waterloo on the playing fields of Eton, on those same fields we lost the battle of Loos. And there's going to be a cry for ousting Latin and Greek, and setting up instead wood-carving, bookkeeping and poker work. They're going to popularise the universities by making them popular with the people who preferred the Polytechnic, and will do nothing to popularise the Polytechnic among the people who preferred the 'Varsity. We're going to establish continuation schools to finish an education which was never begun. We had an education which, at the price of a pound of effort, taught a man to earn a shilling and to enjoy nineteen; we're going to create one which will enable him to earn five shillings and enjoy fifteen; we shall strive through the century on that road of new idealism until every pound of effort teaches him to earn a pound and to enjoy nothing at all. For six hundred years we've made men without minds; soon we shall be making minds without manhood. For Latin and Greek we shall begin by substituting literature, English, history, law; science and commerce will bolt the rest. In another generation the cry against literature and history will be the same as the one to-day against Latin and Greek, and they, in their turn, will be displaced by

the soul-making art of the plumber and the master sweep. And it'll pay in everything except terms of life, for Life Ltd., oh, very limited, is the only joint-stock company in which we all have shares, and the best balance sheet it shows is when there is no dividend. In those days they won't know that Life Ltd. can't pay dividends but only increase its capital. And so the dear old thing'll go into liquidation."

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Louise.

"It doesn't matter. Does it?"

"Not a bit, if only you don't get excited. It's not good for you."

"I'm not excited. I wish you wouldn't fuss over me. But hang it all, why aren't you optimistic? What's the good of my saying all this if you aren't up against me? I'd better go and talk to mother."

Louise laughed low into the darkness.

"No, I shall not talk to mother. She'd start on the Czecho-Slovaks again and I'd rather start on the New World. That's about the last thing she wants. No, I'm unfair. Mother does want a new world. I found a bit of her new world this morning in a little book I picked up on a bookstall, called: 'The Great Thoughts of Horatio Bottomley.' I remember a bit of mother's new world. It runs something like this: '. . . a promised land of humanity, when the streets shall be paved with gold and which shall flow with milk and honey. In other words, a land in which there shall be no Germans — a clean land, God's land!' You know, Louise, that sort of thing must make even the British Empire think. I wonder why we don't adopt '*Gott mit uns?*' We've stuck to '*Ich dien.*' And yet, in spite of all that, all this flapdoodle about making a new world, which originates exclusively among the people who'd rather go to hell than live in a new

world, we've *got* to make a new world, make a new world without frontiers — Idealism! I might as well talk of making a new town without garden walls. The chief occupation of humanity seems to be to throw dead cats over the garden wall and patriotic insults over the frontiers. And still, in spite of that, in spite of all this tendency to wrangle and to row, we've got to make a new world where will be no rival kings, no rival ambassadors, no rival capitalists, in other words, no big bugs. It's the big bug made this war. The little bugs, poor things, they came out of their holes when they were called. I hate Labour, probably because I've done it down. Me and my class. I've got their land, and I've got their money, which is nothing, but I've got their education, and their good breeding, and their leisure. Well, the new world has got to disperse those clots, do away with old John Jesmond, who sits upon the bench and blows because he's overfed, do away with Uncle Angus who sits in his club and blows because he's over-flattered. And I'm afraid it must do away with mother, who sits upon father and blows because she's got power. The new world will have to keep a standing army of people who are neat with the harpoon, and whenever they see a whale, push it in: that'll learn it to blow. We've got to get rid of wealth, and rank, and good manners, and decent clothes, and art, and beauty, and religion — make a clean sweep and get the world down to a decent uniformity of a pound of bread a day and one hat per head. We've got to start again from the level of intellectual barbarism. Got to break up this society that's gone bad; it's past mending. And, by Lenine and by Trotsky! I swear that it had better be ended and never begun again."

After a moment Louise said: "Yes, dear. You must come in now. The mist is beginning to rise."

Obediently, his arm round her shoulder and playing with her soft curls, he went into the house.

XIV

THE fall of Kühlmann precipitated Sir Hugh deeper into his reactions. The German Foreign Secretary had been to him a temporary idol, for as he swung away from his own ruling class, his tradition as a member of that ruling class drew him towards another one. He was a gentleman and it did not then occur to him to turn to the people. But when the treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest suddenly revealed to him the German autocrat as insatiable in his ambition, limitless in his greed, when they showed him Ballin and the German capitalists unrestrainable in their avarice, when they showed him the German Parliament fawning in sulky slavery at its master's feet, he threw over the ruling class of the world. It took him three months to realise this; he was one of those English, liberal-minded men who, to the end of their days, voted for the conservatives; even now he might have hesitated to support roadmender Smith against Lord X. But, during those months, driven by a desire to find something positive on which to hang hope, he had saturated himself with advanced literature. Books and pamphlets from the Bomb Shop already made his study a vast, dusty litter; thus he read, one after the other, Marx's "Capital", some Kropotkin, the *Cambridge Magazine*, week by week, *The Plebs* and *The Masses*, from America; in his weltering mind hurtled the mechanical millennium of the Fabian Society, the dreams of Eugene Debs, books about war and factories translated from the Russian, which seemed to him written by epileptics — and, to make his confusion complete, patriotic defenses of the war by men like

Blatchford, Will Thorne, Hyndman, who once had made war against war their version of peace, and virile effusions by Gompers, who seemed to him to represent the solid earth of trade-unionism, on which socialists, anarchists, guildsmen, syndicalists, were together trying to build on the same spot the castle of the future, every one of them with a different kind of brick.

He was in chaos. He was like a small boy in the large schoolroom of 1850 who tried to absorb Latin from his master, while the teacher of mathematics was bellowing at the boy on the next form. Unable to find in these aspirations an obviously common purpose, he found them difficult to support: strive as he might Sir Hugh could not help having been a banker for twenty years and being a practical man. That is to say, he was not interested in an object unless he could clearly see the road by which it might be attained. The intellectuals did not satisfy him; they satisfied him even less than the ruling class, for the ruling class just wanted to keep things as they were, and more so. He could understand that. Any one can understand conservatism, because no one need do so. Thus, in that glowing month of June, when still the Allied front was twisting and bending, Sir Hugh found himself in an intellectual desert. He had lost faith in all men and all systems, so far as the future of the world was concerned. He thought: "The solar system is like a roulette gone mad, and the earth is the ball. It's been rolling for millions of years; what's going to happen if it stops? What hole will the ball plump into? Thirty-six — A pocketful of money for everybody — or zero? And the eternal banker sweeps up the stakes?" Only Sir Hugh could not stay in that state of mental suspension; he was too accustomed to hero-worship; he had worshipped Gladstone; in 1886 he had worshipped Chamberlain;

later, Sir Edward Grey had been his ideal. Now no leader could lead him, and he could not lead himself. So he had to choose no longer between men but between emotions. This explained his sudden, rhapsodic feeling, when he realised in Leicester Square England's burning youthfulness. He understood that behind scheming diplomats, grasping ambassadors, ambitious princes, stood arrayed vast multitudes, mute and inglorious, masses of English people who had made a rough liberalism, masses of Germans who had practised research, masses of Americans who had developed beyond belief the intelligent way of mechanical life. More and more he realised the Americans; he did not understand them well, because they seemed so urgent, so restless, so individually desirous — and yet, perhaps because they were free from our rotten class traditions, they were the only people in the world who, so far, had created a moral ideal.

This realisation of the spirit of the people, which transcends forms and crowns, brought him, for the first time, to think of England as England and not as the United Kingdom. Those three months had been a time of swift growth. He had thought about the Englishman, generalised about him. He saw him now in his slowness, his moderation, his affected love of liberty, the roots of which were set in indifference; he understood that the gusts of passion which perpetually carry him away and cause him to set up false gods meant that the Englishman was a repressed creature who always sought for a vicar to express him. But when he considered the Englishman's achievement through the ages it was impossible to despise him. He had not been continuously inspired by idealism; though he had risen against an autocratic Stuart and an unpopular faith, though he had put down slavery, though he certainly had gone to war in '14 for the defense of an

injured little country, he had never pursued a principle.

The Englishman had been like the others, ambitious for his flag, greedy for his purse, and yet, in so doing, he had brought liberty, and a rough version of civilised comfort into every corner of the world. The Englishman in history had been the champion of moderation, and to extend his moderate sway had been guilty of the worst excesses. The Englishman was splendid, too dull to understand his defeats, too heavy to be moved aside from his objects, too careless to be a tyrant, too indifferent to thought to persecute it, and he had erected comparative liberty by not caring a damn what anybody else did. Strange creature that understands nothing and benefits by everything! The Englishman had treated the Americans of the eighteenth century as rebels, and after his defeat had quietly gone away and given all his other conquests the freedom he had refused those Americans; the Englishman had hated the French Revolution of 1789 — and fifty years later adopted its parliamentary system; all through the late nineteenth century the Englishman had modelled his laws on those of Germany — and then fought Germany because he disliked its form of culture. He was incoherent, incompetent in the extreme, hated the very word " ideal ", and yet there ran through his heavy frame and his fine nerves an impulse which had made England greater than Rome, and more enduring, an impulse which had dammed rivers, drained swamps and turned aside seas, which had substituted law for the tomahawk, the Sunday-school reader for the tribal legend, built tramways in Central Africa and bathrooms in the Solomon Isles. The Englishman had rested upon the universe bored blue eyes, and said: " Let's be comfortable and paddle our own canoe." In pursuance of this intoxicating ideal he had cleared the world of barbaric strife and planted the eternal monu-

ments of civilisation in fields where never had floated the lilies of the French or the castles of the Portuguese.

Such thoughts as these led him often into the fields. Generally, now, he walked across the marsh because he liked its breadth and the prospect of the symbolic sea. Often, as he passed Policeman's House, he thought of Cradoc, and the arguments which long ago nearly had captured him. He realised that eventually he would meet him on this familiar marsh, and so one day was not surprised to see him come across, it seemed from Camber. He watched him. Cradoc was thinking. He paused for a long time before some shorn sheep. As he came up to Sir Hugh, he smiled: it did him good to meet somebody who was not hostile. They talked for a moment on the road. Cradoc had married Molly at last. In the end they had gone to the registrar's because Molly found Mr. Denny so tepid that she left the Church on the spot. As she put it: "What's the good of going to church for twenty years if the vicar's going to be rude to you?"

"So I suppose you're very happy," said Sir Hugh.

Cradoc shrugged his shoulders. "I'm afraid I've lost the gift. Still, I don't want to commit suicide, so I suppose I've got some reason to like life. This war makes one realise how much life's worth."

"You mean how little."

"No," said Cradoc, "it's cheap enough, but those who can stick to it realise what it holds when they tell themselves they might be lying stiff in a foreign field."

"Yes," said Sir Hugh. "Though — Rupert Brooke said something about a soldier . . .

> If I should die think only this of me:
> That there's some corner of a foreign field
> That is for ever England."

Then Cradoc said, with a little sneer: "If Lord Northcliffe is right in saying we've nine hundred thousand dead, we've gone some way towards internationalising the world. Rather drastic."

"Don't be so literal," said Sir Hugh, and tried to make him understand this new feeling of his, the spirit of England which predominates over English systems. The conscientious objector, narrow-headed, acute, and incredibly rigid, listened to the end and said:

"You've let me talk plainly to you before, so I suppose I shan't offend you if I say that you're only a patriot, after all."

"Yes," said Sir Hugh, feeling excitement rise, "yes, I'm a patriot in spite of my fatherland. I believe there is in the English people, in all the Anglo-Saxon peoples, Englishmen, Americans, Anglo-Saxon colonies, a moral ideal which will regenerate the world. And I'll tell you something: if I hadn't been too old, I'd have enlisted with the rest, and I've been thinking that perhaps I'm not too old."

"So you too must die for error?"

"No. I don't wholly disagree with you. I'm not in love with the capitalist system, but I'm coming to think that whether the peace be glorious or ignoble, peace is worth fighting for for its own sake."

"Nothing is worth fighting for," said Cradoc. "Except perhaps freedom."

Then, to his own amazement, Sir Hugh had an outburst: "Freedom! freedom! you socialists have always got your mouths full of freedom. For a hundred years you've specialised in freedom, and there's hardly one of you has stuck to his doctrine. Look at your own leaders! at Hyndman addressing recruiting meetings, Will Thorne turned into a colonel; think of Hervé, who for ten years

before the war preached that the working. man had no fatherland, advocated military strikes, and suggested that the proper billet for the workman's bullet is the back of his own officer. Hervé supports this war with the same fury of eloquence; and Anatole France writes thirty volumes in every one of which a sneer or a cry of hate greets every general who treads the boards: when this war breaks out he tries to enlist. Kropotkin was for the war; Scheidemann was for the war; Gorky was for the war. And your parties who got into power on opposition to war, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, all of you who for generations have killed war with your mouth, came along with the bourgeoisie. *You* didn't tell the soldiers to strike. *You* didn't tell the workmen to strike. *You* didn't tell them to refuse taxes. No! all you socialists, like the time-servers, the lickspittles you are, after all your talk at meetings, voted war credits and supplied fodder to the guns. What's the good of you? Why! you can't even hold together inside a nation, let alone in the world. You quarrel, you wrangle, you burgeon off in sectional rivalry. In this country one can't even find one's way among your Labour Parties, Independent Labour Parties, Trade Unions, Fabian Societies, British Socialist Parties, Social Democratic Parties, National Socialist Parties, Trades' Councils, National Guilds, and heaven knows what. For chaos you've only one remedy, and that's another chaos. If you do establish anything, it's either a Bolshevism where no man is safe and no man is fed, or some State socialist machine run by bureaucrats with brass buttons on their coats and electric buttons on their desks. You lead to a State where everything is regulated; where the London County Council will be Controller of Paradise, where everything will be against the law because everything will be law, and where

there will be no liberty because no man can do anything he wants without slightly interfering with the equal liberties of others."

"Then you're against me," said Cradoc. "I'm sorry. I thought you were coming to us." He did not trouble to answer the arguments of his adversary. They had made no impression on him because his mind was entirely filled with his created ideal, petrified in a way; though he was open to reason, he could not realise that anything outside his ideal might be reasonable. He was as decided that everything must be changed as a country squire is decided that nothing may. In his fury of reërection Cradoc was practically a Conservative. "After all," he added, "it doesn't matter. When the revolution comes what good could an aristocrat like you do?"

Sir Hugh smiled. "I suppose there's only one law for a man of my sort. This war comes, and probably I must die. If the revolution comes I can commit hara-kiri."

XV

Slowly Sir Hugh pulled at his pipe. It was a black September night, and already he was at ease in this communication trench, his rifle between his knees, his head bent under the helmet, waiting contentedly, thoughtlessly, for orders that might come, or as contentedly to wait if no orders came. Two months, and a soldier. Already his thoughts were those of a soldier: his right boot hurt him; the coffee essence that day had been worse than usual. And a barrage had stopped the letters. For a moment he absorbed himself in impressions of the night. There was little doing on this strip of the Lorraine front where the Legion occupied a short sector. Far away in the

northwest he heard a steady rumble from the American guns on the other side of Verdun, and some ten miles south, where also the Americans lay in front of the St. Mihiel bend, something was going on. It amused him to think that however quiet it might be here in the French sector, both north and south the Americans were determined that something should go on. And the smile released his thoughts.

"They're taking their time," said Prokop by his side. Douro grunted: he was a northern Spaniard, silent as a Highlander, and Prokop, an always-ebullient Slovak, irritated him. The Slovak went on talking. Sir Hugh liked him, for sometimes in rest billets Prokop executed extraordinary dances, and he had a way of playing *Deutschland ueber Alles* on an incredible instrument made of two cigar boxes, some waxed string and a nail, which drove the snipers into absurd fury. The fourth man they did not talk to. Though it was not etiquette in the Legion to ask questions, it was felt that a man who was tall, fat, fair, and dared to call himself Bdjsky and to say he was a Jugoruthen, must be a Boche. Most of the non-coms had tried to get him killed: as they never succeeded this was taken as a further sign that he must be a Boche.

The men went on talking in whispers. Sir Hugh wondered how long it would be before the officer came back to take them out on patrol. Carelessly he noted the sound of stray bullets: zzz-pt, they came, and now and then zzz-pf, as they struck a stone. "Funny thing to have happened to him," he reflected. "How easy it had been in a way. The slow march of his mind all through that summer, the realisation that though no political system was worth the bones of a Pomeranian Grenadier, there was something that must not die, and that was

England." Being logical, he had in July realised that he must enlist. He smiled as he thought of Billy Bridge. The barrister had sat back in his armchair at the Mausoleum Club and laughed: "My dear fellow," he had said, "they simply wouldn't look at you. You get on with your job at the Board of Control." Sir Hugh had not attempted to make Billy understand his high romantic feeling; that could not have been done without a trepan. He had simply insisted, and when Billy at last had taken him seriously, he explained that even if he bribed his way into the army, which was feasible, the officer would turn him back when he inspected the draft. He had suggested a job on the staff if Hugh really wanted khaki and a chance to get photographed. But Sir Hugh insisted that he didn't want to go on the staff, but to do something for his country. At last, provided with an introduction, he had gone to Finsbury to interview the C. O. of the Honourable Artillery Company.

His thoughts took another turn. That was the day of the Finsbury election. His appointment being in the evening, he had found himself outside the City Road Tube, where Belcher was addressing a crowd. Sir Hugh remembered the yells of "Intern them all!" There had been a row, too; a naval officer shouted something about another candidate, and Sir Hugh was carried in a rush that knocked a man over, was for a moment the centre of struggling arms and legs; an officer with a Mons ribbon seemed to be fighting two or three people, and Sir Hugh kicked something soft that said "gaw." The crowd had carried him into Banner Street, led by Mr. Pemberton Billing. Sir Hugh smiled as he remembered the flying stones, the breaking of windows, and Mr. Billing's high voice as he shouted: "I declare war on Tupper! I challenge him to come out and fight!"

"Comic," thought Sir Hugh. He had ceased to think these things painful.

Something came over, and he ducked, being still a raw soldier. Zzz-oo, murmured the thing; then: Boom! Whizz bang, probably. As they laughed at him at the H. A. C. he had decided to join the Foreign Legion. That night Lady Oakley wept on his neck and quoted some lines fit to hearten him:

"What have I done for you,
England, my England?
What is there I would not do,
England, my own?"

Poor old Lena, she'd got it bad. They'd taken him in the Legion, asked no questions, and trained him in six weeks. Damn that coffee. It was that gave him a pain. Zzz-boom! And Prokop trying to tell him in detail how he lost his innocence.

Ah, here was the officer, a short, hard little French ranker, with the manner of a slaver and the pluck of a wild cat. No flies on the Legion officers. Well, they'd be going over now. His first patrol! Sir Hugh's heart beat faster. But the officer went on and into a dugout. Sir Hugh found himself admiring the neat trench, with its well-timbered wall and the graceful French pattern of brattices. Yes, change had come upon him. As strange a change as anybody's. Everything had changed, everything was changing. The young men had stopped in their careers, might resume them, might make others; who would go back to the 'Varsity after such sport as this? Girls, too. They'd found new sports, strange tasks, rapid loves, bereavements that would drive them into looseness or waste them into dry age. Exalted and hardened women, how were we going to absorb them.

Would not the youngest be old? Perhaps, too, all youth would be old. Poor Stephen was old, and yet crude. Sir Hugh wondered how youth would fare, so mature and so inexperienced. Everything provided to intoxicate and excite them, war, kudos, new pleasures, high wages for the poor, a taste of luxury for the middle stratum; how were they going to maintain all that? What was the boy of sixteen going to do when his two pounds a week failed him — the second lieutenant when he had to brush his own breeches? Everybody was in it. He wondered whether the institutions would suffer as much as the individuals, whether the trade unions would break under the internal stress of the rank and file revolting against their officials, the guerilla between patriotic labour parties and pacifists. Democracy was in chaos, no doubt. And all we offered them were the fruits of chaos; the papers were full of paragraphs about housing, about the maintenance of high wages, the partnership between Capital and Labour, the opening up of land to the soldiers — yes, it was all very well, but Sir Hugh wondered whether this was good will or whether it did not merely arise from a panic in the ruling class. He smiled: the ruling class would be all right; it would imitate the Russian nobleman attacked by wolves, and would keep off Labour by throwing out of the sled, from time to time, sections of the middle class. " The ruling class," he thought, " well, it won't be the same. Now for the rule of the vulgar. It may be as well; the motto of my old class was: 'Defiance' not ' Defense.' No wonder we've got licked by Albert Stanley, and Geddes, and Weir, and the other tradesmen." For a moment he mourned his old class. At bottom he hated the business man; he found him adventurous, therefore almost an adventurer. He thought it right that the tailor should become a colonel in " General Post", but

he had not liked it; he thought it right that Parliament should crawl upon its belly and wag an ingratiating tail when Lloyd-George raised his voice, but he did not like it. What blind alley did all this lead to? No growth here, nor reaction; just England shoved into abstinence from privilege, suspensions of power, mechanical controls, with no sign of shape in the future times; no planned State with production exactly fitted to need, good wages for all, limited profits, regular employment, but blind alley.

Incoherent thoughts filled his mind as his view of England grew cosmic. He realised from memories of newspapers and plays how high and how swiftly had risen the tide of stunt, vulgar sensationalism, sentimentality, lip-patriotism. He found blind alley everywhere, blind alley in the debt, so enormous that it could not be repaid; blind alleys in the chaos of the churches, whose ship was pitching on "love your enemies", and rolling on "not peace, but a sword." Poor old ark, beaten by the current of non-resistance, heading to the maelstrom of a British god — no wonder they were sick on board and sought desperately for some Zotos, whether spiritualism, the Thirty-Nine Articles, or the Mons angels. Blind indeed that alley, and blind the schools, where the old culture was being pulled down, though nobody knew what to put up instead. No Latin, no Greek. Simple enough, but one could not educate boys through the things one did not teach them. Double entry and Morris dances, he supposed. But what then? What sort of men were we trying to make — deliberately? Nobody knew. It looked like an open road and it was blind alley. Blind alley everywhere. Blind alley in the law, which let off one soldier for shooting his wife's lover, and gave another five years for the same crime; blind alley in the rising cry for

a greater population, balanced by the obstinate refusal of the State to give the illegitimate a status; blind alley in liberty, now that letters were opened, that the press was censored, that meetings were supervised, political pamphlets officially garbled; blind alley in the State, with its daily-spreading bureaucrats, just stuck there, regulating, controlling, determined to go on till doomsday; blind alley for those who came back, maimed, fit only for half work, or for sweating . . . He felt passionately that this war was not leading anywhere; it was only keeping something up. But horribly, it was not leaving things as they had been; it was rooting things up, and it was not preparing a new order; there was no purpose, except in Wilson, perhaps, and some hard common sense told Sir Hugh that the others would see to it that Wilson did not make an ordered world. Chaos would coalesce against clarity, and it would win, because there is in mankind more chaos than clarity. They did not want to evolve anything balanced; they liked the scrum, the gamble of trade, the battle of master against man, sentiment, cruelty, error, insecurity; they liked to barge in their millions, fierce faces ground against each other, into the blind alley of the future.

The officer came back. Prokop was still whispering.

"*Toi ta gueule!*" said the officer. "I'm going over," thought Sir Hugh. Exciting. He wanted to go over. He had been twice in small shows; he had killed his Boche, too, apart from the unknown results of rifle fire. The man had run at him from a dugout as the Legion swarmed over the first line, fired, missed; as he lurched forward, an active, dark little man, he slipped as he lunged: without a tremor, in an automatic movement, Sir Hugh had stuck him in the side. It struck him as queer that this memory should be so neutral: he had swung to

the left as he struck, quite regulation, so as to free his bayonet. It hadn't come out readily — as if the edge of the wound were sucking at the knife like lips.

Now the four, spaced out, had crawled through the wire. No Man's Land. Black and pitted with holes. Something stank. There was a sniper in one of those holes. Orders were to come upon him suddenly and make an end of him. Sir Hugh fumbled in the darkness, walking light. The slightest noise would expose him. Now and then stray bullets fell: zzz-pt, they said, and zzz-pf. It seemed endless, and noisy, because one listened so hard. He found few shell holes here. Then, with a shiver, he saw something on the left, instinctively crouched, his bayonet low. But the shape told him this must be one of his own. Indeed, as the thing came closer, he saw it was Prokop.

Then things happened all of a sudden. One of those speculative bullets hit the Slovak, who gave a long, shrill cry and, seeing Sir Hugh, clung to him, knocked off his helmet. Sir Hugh put his hand over the man's mouth, but not in time to stop the high chatter. Life arose in the trench opposite. Verey lights went up, and from quite close came the pac-pac-pac of a machine gun. Sir Hugh's coolness left him. He dropped the body as if to run, but at that moment was petrified, for a searchlight, unmasked, struck him full in the face. It was like a shaft of silver in his eyes; it numbed him, crushed him; with ineffectual hands which had dropped the rifle he tried to shield his eyes; he wanted to get out of the light and could not. "Like a moth," he thought, "like a moth." Then something struck his head, gently, it seemed, and he turned to go back, his hands against his forehead, walking steadily in the beam of light, hypnotised by the narrow white blaze that his feet followed. He thought: "My head's heavy,"

and irrelevantly, of rabbits who run at night upon the roads, trapped by the beam from a motor-car lamp. Then he tripped upon the French wire, and as he fell a complete darkness rose in him. He thought with immense relief: "How black everything is! I must have got out of the beam."

XVI

It was ten minutes to eleven. Sir Hugh paused in Trafalgar Square. He was due at the Board of Control, to close some old business, at a quarter past. He had walked down from Connaught Square and now stood aimless, a little depressed by the grey day and by the excitements of the previous weeks. He had seen war, lived for weeks under shell fire and heavy rain; he had seen tragedy, too, in the hospital train which carried him from Lorraine with eight hundred Americans, nearly all bad cases, some of gas. But he was lucky. His head wound was so slight that by the middle of October he was discharged from hospital. The doctors had thought him rather old; strings had been quietly pulled by Lady Oakley, who had arrived in Paris the day he reached the base hospital. He had been discharged. He smiled as he remembered his arrival in Paris. He saw a picture of himself in his blue horizon uniform, a narrow, precautionary bandage round his head. As Lady Oakley led him out of the Gare de L'Est to the waiting cab, a little group of French soldiers in full kit, burnt a deeper brown than was gained in the Lorraine trenches, were lined up in the yard behind piled arms. He remembered a scrap of their song:

"Depuis qu'j'suis v'nu dans c'te putain d'Afrique,
Où c'que j'fais l'Jacques avec un sac su'l dos,
Un sac su'l dos,

Je suis dev'nu sec comme un coup d'trique,
J'ai bientôt plus que la peau sur les os:
C'est nous les Joyeux, les petits Joyeux,
Les petits Joyeux qui n'ont pas froid aux châsses;
C'est nous les Joyeux, les petits Joyeux,
Les petits Joyeux qui n'ont pas froid aux yeux."

Wild looking men they were, a kind he had not seen before. A friendly porter told him they were part of a *Bataillon d'Afrique*, rogues, mutineers, all the scapegraces and unmanageables, nearly all men with a past and without a future, yet of all the most gallant. He understood whence had sprung that desperate and cheerful song. He sighed. Soldier brothers of his in a common, vague cause, robber knights. Blackguards and saints together had died, for fun, for habit, for love, or because they had nothing else to do, because the world had grown the prey of men so vile that all one could do was to give the mastery to some, and then patiently as the insect builds the coral-reef, create against the junkers, both vanquished and victorious, a more harmonious edifice. Out! All over, and the war too, it seemed. He had not reënlisted, for obviously the job was done; the English policeman, in his bored, good-humoured way, had moved on the disturbers and now, it seemed, was content to take the same old wages from the same old commissioner. He smiled at his metaphor: he was wrong, for even the police had struck. Still, it did not do to analyse metaphors.

Yes, it was all over. That doubtless was why the Oakleys had reopened Connaught Square. As in the first days of the war they had felt unable to stay locked up in Knapenden; they needed to be in the middle of the rumours, special editions and telephone calls; they could not bear to let peace happen and not be there. As he waited in the square he felt nervous as a lover on

a silken ladder; the ladder would hold all right, and everything felt safe, but his nerves were in rags. Too much had happened in the last six weeks. It was almost impossible to remember how De l'Esperey had crashed through the Bulgarian front and at a blow brought down Ferdinand, while Allenby in Palestine swept up north, swift as a weasel. Then, with an effect of shock, Germany had accepted the Fourteen Points, and for one long month Sir Hugh had lived in agonised uncertainty while Wilson, almost inhuman in his absolute logic and his entire clearness of purpose, demanded to know beyond peradventure whether the German junker was indeed dead.

Every one of Wilson's notes had filled him with the delight that a skilled advocate experiences in the presence of a perfect case; inch by inch Wilson had forced the junkers back, driven them into admissions, hunted them into the publicity of their own newspapers, enlisted on his side a German public opinion clamouring for freedom. But all through something Lansdownian clung to Sir Hugh: supposing Wilson went too far? Drove the junker to turn and, by military dictatorship, prolong this horror another year? That had made rag of his nerves, and also he who now had fought and bled sickened before the stream of rumour according to which every day Turkey surrendered and the Kaiser abdicated. He had lived a long life and was not yet used to the triumph of lies. Nor had he learned intemperance of thought while high explosive broke and fumed a few yards from the parapet to which he clung. They had been a nightmare, those weeks in London. He lived in a world where the non-combatants strove and fought for the first time — and against peace. Still his ears were filled with the agonised cries of the patriotic papers, of the Carsons, the Bot-

tomleys, the Beresfords, of *Le Matin* and *Le Journal*, which he had learned to read. He thought of Senator Lodge, struggling for blood and revenge, seeing everywhere peace trap and evasion, beside himself at the idea that Germany might be spared ravage, and gathering to stand by him in the last ditch all who might help in preventing Wilson from forcing peace on a joyful, bloodthirsty world. Nightmare, yes, nightmare. Those people of the Mausoleum Club were still crying out to refuse an armistice, to invade, to devastate, to show the Germans what burning churches, hanged U-boat crews, gibbeted Kaisers, looked like — and this as a mild inducement to the German people to accept unconditional surrender. Then, all through the month, territorial demands had been whispered, demands that slunk and hid behind the broad justice of Wilson's points, new demands for territory, for mining rights, for colonies, for the creation of incoherent States intended to weaken Germany, not to create stability, States like Poland and Bohemia, to which we would hand over German populations who would ferment and plot exactly as the enslaved Italians and Serbs had plotted against Austria. We were going to fill Europe with Ulsters.

Sir Hugh, in those weeks, had come across as much fear and as much greed as in the worst moments of the war. His friends were necessarily professional men, men of leisure, merchants, engineers, and among them he sought in vain for an idea, even a foolish one, of the reconstruction of society. He found nothing. They weren't thinking about making a new society; all they were thinking about was the coming labour unrest, the difficulties of demobilisation. All they wanted was to set up the old system again, with high wages if they must, and high profits if they could; with the employer at the

top and the worker at the bottom; with the good old houses and the good old bugs, subject to a housing programme which would provide employment and stop Bolshevism. They wanted to increase production and to grab it; to buy cheap shares, develop Russian copper and tin; they expected unemployment to settle somehow; when the war debt was mentioned they raved against the capital levy, which "would destroy credit by swallowing capital" — and yet they had nothing to put up against the alternative seven-and-sixpenny income tax. They had no ideas; they weren't looking for ideas. They were content that ten million men should have died for the sake of business as usual.

And Mr. R. G. Knowles was promoting a universal road to be built from the sea to Switzerland, along the old trench lines, so that humanity might never forget its hatred. He had seen man's passion for separate nationality give rise to fever. Nobody wanted unity and home rule within that unity. Nobody would let any one else's faith or language alone; everybody wanted a given nationality to prevail. People one had never heard of as separate people, Slovaks, Syrians, Vlachs, Podolians, wanted their own government and flag, to set up more frontiers — and armed guards. The United States of the World were a dream.

He had grown dull at last. Austria had crashed, and this was described as camouflage. Sir Hugh wondered whether the unconditional surrender of Germany would be described as the culmination of German camouflage. It was incredible. We were asking for the trial of those responsible for atrocities — that is to say, for the trial of those people who alone could make peace, for an armistice without terms, presumably to inspire confidence, to refuse to deal with the new German Government, presumably

to help on Bolshevism in Germany. "Let them Bolsh," said the *Globe*. This struck Sir Hugh as terrible. He wondered whether the *Globe* thought that Bolshevism stopped at frontiers and would spare us. He wondered whether the *Globe* would say "Let them typhe," if typhoid were raging next door.

And yet, in spite of the little men struggling to keep off Peace, she was coming, white and bland. The day before, everybody was sure the armistice would be signed, and, feeling peace coming, everybody was quarrelsome. There had almost been a fight at the Gadarene Club on Saturday, because the Kaiser had abdicated again at half-past five, and the secret Lansdownites came out to face the last-ditchers with the suggestion of easier terms. The people were quieter. All through Sunday they had formed little crowds in Downing Street. Then they grew tired of waiting for Mr. Lloyd-George and went to St. James's Park to see the German guns, which the little boys were using as seesaws.

"I wonder," thought Sir Hugh, "whether this is really going to end." He looked round the Square, bleak, silent and grey. There were not thirty people in it. A few yards away stood an Australian, puffing at his pipe with an air of melancholy. Dent's clock said five to eleven. Sir Hugh thought he had better be getting on to the Board. He felt cold. Then, from nowhere, sprang a man who climbed the plinth of the Nelson Column and there stood a board. Interested, Sir Hugh drew closer. Roughly chalked were the words:

ARMISTICE SIGNED

For a moment he did not move. He felt calm. So it had come! Well, there you were. Evidently the Aus-

tralian agreed, for he turned, read, and turned away again, drawing from his pipe a puff of ethereal resignation. But inside Sir Hugh felt excitement rise. Something was spreading over the city. One after the other the windows of the Grand Hotel and of the other government offices down Northumberland Avenue grew crowded with girls' heads. The thirty people in the Square turned into a hundred, and Sir Hugh heard the first ragged cheer as four improperly dressed soldiers passed. But his true thrill came when, solemn and self-contained, a policeman climbed the plinth and on a bugle sounded the "all clear." It seemed as if all London were emptying itself into the Square. Sir Hugh's ears registered the hurried patter of feet, as girls and men ran out of the government offices. Things happened round him, more and more noisy, more and more overwhelming; crowds swarmed across the roads until they were too thick to move; submerged the base of the Column in a black tide. People were blowing horns; a procession led by a soldier beating a bucket was heading for Buckingham Palace through the Mall. Bursting maroons filled the populace with a joyful sense of inoffensive air raid. He saw Australians dancing, cars, taxis, A. S. C. lorries being stormed by a crowd determined to ride anywhere. For a whole hour he remained half stunned in the middle of the roaring crowd. He heard the joy bells. That day he passed in chaos. It took him two hours to get back to Connaught Square, for the crowds would not move, and already people in the tubes could neither get in nor get out. The house was empty; his family and all the servants were lost in the streets.

It was an incredible week. Day by day, and night by night, he was the centre of a crowd full of youth, that bellowed, and danced, and drank, where respectable old

gentlemen like himself felt ridiculous with flags in their top-hats. On the Tuesday night he was kissed in a promiscuous way to which he was not used. His pocket was picked in the same moment, but Sir Hugh was too innocent to connect such a fact with natural impulses . . .

Yes, it was over. Was he happy? He did not know. It was enough that the war was over and that the new times could not be so hideous as those four years.

XVII

JANUARY again, and the war was done. Sir Hugh stood in Udimore copse, swishing with his stick at the dead brambles. Once more the prophecy of spring in his nostrils, of obstinate life rising again. He thought: "It's a long time since I came here. Since Monica and I came to see the lambs. I wonder what Monica meant last night by asking me if I thought one could be happy if one married a man who loved one and whom one didn't love. I said yes, because love is such a speculation and there are so few people whom one can love for ever. So why bother at the start. I don't think I ought to have said that. It's an idea suitable for fifty-five, not for twenty-eight. Though, after all, people who are twenty-eight must become people of fifty-five; they may as well make a start. I wonder when the world will be fifty-five."

So his thoughts went away to this world which he now considered with a little irony, some indignation and much pity. What a tragic world it had been since Armistice Day! "It had always been," he supposed; "the history of the world was a tragedy in a million acts." He remembered Anatole France's universal history of men: they were born, they suffered and they died.

What surprised him was that they should suffer so willingly and do so little to guard against future suffering. The past election had filled him with disquiet and shame. He had seen it rushed upon the nation, for no reason except to snatch a swift mandate for a prime minister who dared not wait until the people faced their cold fit; he had seen elected instead of a parliament which had ceased to represent the people, because it was old, a parliament which did not represent them at all, because only half or so could vote. He did not mind that very much, at bottom, for he was aristocrat enough to despise the parliament in whose defense he would have died, but he hated the preludes to its birth. He had tried to set his sail to the windiness of Mr. Lloyd-George's speeches, read every line of them to discover what precisely was going to be done to provide houses, to open the land to the soldiers, but not a single indication could he find of how it was going to be done, who was going to pay for it. He found that the new order was founded on three war cries: "Hang the Kaiser", "Make the Hun pay", and "Keep the Hun out."

"Rather negative," he thought, "for a new order." He hated the spirit of it all. He hated the bagman strain which, in every newspaper, totted up costs and made out invoices for presentation to Germany. "By all means let them pay for the actual damage," thought Sir Hugh, "but don't let us bankrupt our souls to fill our purses." Every day, in the newspapers, he read suggestions that we should recover fifty thousand millions, by taking over the German industries and presumably making the people work under the lash. If we did this, what of the future? Were we going to keep the Germans out of the League of Nations as perpetual enemies? Make of the League of Nations a league against Germany compelled forever to

arm and prepare war? He found that the League of Nations had no friends, that those who tolerated it did not mean to disarm. They wanted the peace of Jean Coq, an armed, shining, terrible peace, a peace that would burst like a shell and set the world in a blaze . . . All of them, all of them.

In the Park he had heard a speaker of the Women's Party educating an open-eyed people in the theory that the League of Nations was a good thing provided Germany was kept out and the others leagued against her! Already Wilson was beaten on the freedom of the seas, just as he was beaten on naval disarmament. It was natural that soldiers should lay down their arms, but sailors must keep their cutlasses. Only in those weeks had he realised the superstitious worship which attaches to the British fleet; it embodied our sense of romantic war; that, he knew, was the danger more potent than the greed of merchants and the pride of kings: the poetry of war, the glamour that has made Shakespeare small and Nelson great. He hated the people then; they deserved the rulers they got.

And what rulers! Diplomats were only super-card-sharpers. And they didn't even do that properly. Incapable of understanding the people, refusing to meet them because they despised them, revolution always took them by surprise: had not Lord Milner, a week before the fall of the Czar, assured us that all was steady in Russia! But they could always finesse themselves deeper into their mess. Already, in those six weeks, we had stretched our armistice terms, demanded the surrender of more merchant ships, extended the neutral zone on the Rhine . . . Germany was down, why not? We had signed an armistice based on the Fourteen Points, and every day we set up new points in our favour. The

French papers were openly demanding a buffer State, presumably under French protection, on the left bank of the Rhine, without reference to the German inhabitants; Italy was seizing from the Slav the Adriatic coast and claiming her share of Asia Minor without reference to the Greek population; we, too, wanted Palestine; the French wanted Syria. "Was all that in the Fourteen Points?" he wondered.

Perhaps not, but Germany was down, why not? Had not the war created a vast civil service? One had to find them colonial jobs. National feeling, which is the enemy of peace, was the spirit of sabotage. Every one to have his own dunghill. He realised that until all mankind stood under one flag, enjoying only local home rule, war would continue. The price of nationality was war. Now, in the name of nationality, grab and revenge were the preludes to the new order. It would be built on suspicion, on the theory that behind a frontier of bayonets Germany would arm and try again. It was a pretty way of inducing her to keep quiet, to prepare to inflict upon her people crushing tribute, economic boycott, and the loss of German speaking peoples. It hurt Sir Hugh to think that, apart from Wilson, a few pacifists in Golder's Green, and some conscientious objectors in gaol, nobody sympathised with the German revolution any more than with the Russian. Capital was supreme; stricken already with the madness which destroys all power, capital was trying to make the German revolution worse by suppressing in every paper but two the fact that Hoover, the American Food Controller, wished to raise the blockade, so that the German people might not by famine by driven into Bolshevism.

Yes, it had been a sickening election, more dishonest than usual. He did not object to conscription, if proved

necessary, but it enraged him to read consecutive statements by the Prime Minister which all disagreed: first, conscription depended on the Peace Conference; then there would not be any if other nations gave it up; then there might and then there mightn't; and anyhow we must maintain our fleet, which was purely defensive as it could not go to Berlin, though, in the course of defence, it had won the war! Sir Hugh's ironic sense delighted in Mr. Lloyd-George. It took a professional democrat to realise the stupidity of the people. And he had been right, he had won. He had stood for the old system of balance of power as against a League of Nations, the old system which had made rivalry, secret alliances, and war. He had won, and now would fasten on England conscription and censorships. The war had given freedom to beaten Germany and beaten Russia, and raped freedom from victorious England, perhaps from victorious America, who seemed about to provide for a big navy as the profit of her victory.

The election was Wilson's defeat, though Wilson was already beaten. Already Congress was turning against him. Even the Americans were ensnared by dreams of domination, and Roosevelt was having a success with his Twelve Points, gaining cheers by proposing that Germany should have no vote in the Peace Conference, no place in the League of Nations, and be the victim of a commercial boycott, while only the reactionaries of Russia (camouflaged as the party of law and order) were to attend the Peace Conference. It was dreadful. It was like the program of our new One Flag League, that clamoured for the whole of the German commercial navy, her entire gold reserve, and the management of all her industries.

"They hope to weaken Germany so that she cannot

prepare revenge," thought Sir Hugh, "and indeed they may delay it — but every one of those exactions is a seed from which, in coming generations, hate and revenge will sprout in a hundred million German hearts. The only way to prevent revenge is to deprive it of cause, to refrain from taking an acre unless the inhabitants wish it; to forego all indemnities except for actual damage; to do nothing to cripple Germany commercially, but to help her new democracy to be happy. Happiness is the foe of revenge. And as for our debt, we the rich must pay it because we own England and are answerable for her debts."

Still he swished at the brambles that crackled and broke. He hoped for no new democratic order: even the British democracy loved it not. It had voted against Liberalism and Labour; so long as the Kaiser was hanged and it was revenged, it didn't care how we handled Russia and protected England's future. The British elector didn't care whether we had a secret policy, or any policy in Russia. It saw our rulers refuse to discuss peace with the Bolsheviks and inform the Germans that a German Bolshevik Government would also be ignored. And yet the voter believed that we accepted Wilson's theory and didn't want to impose on any country a form of government other than it chose. Indeed, the electors cheered the statement that the Bolsheviks were a sham government and cared nothing that the Russian people had tolerated it for fourteen months. The elector was fed on Bolshevik atrocities, and did not conclude that the Bolsheviks were atrocious because the régime of the Tsar had turned them into brutes. He read with horror that the beggars and vagabonds who usually lived in the cellars were turning princesses into the snow — and did not tell himself that the princesses were merely suffering

retribution for having during centuries kept these people in cellars. The elector, like his ruler, had but one remedy for social unrest: invade. Never an attempt to understand and meet grievance, but force, and more force. Invade and grind these new social democracies, so that the French bondholders might get their interest and the British company promoters their concessions. Gerrymandered? Sir Hugh would have liked to believe it.

It was true that two thirds of the soldiers were disfranchised, that opposition candidates had to go to the Government for petrol and for paper, that the Press Bureau censored their news, and that Sinn Fein leaflets were blacked out — but that didn't explain it wholly. He did not know, but he felt with a security almost divinely revealed that the people liked the coalition of interests and hates. The women had been the worst, stimulated like Sylvia and his wife by the excitement and bloodshed, blackly afraid of all novelty.

He wondered what would happen. In May or June military demobilisation would make complete the industrial chaos. Nothing effective would be done, and so the coalition might drive into Bolshevism those who would ask for bread and be given promises. Even America faltered; Senator Knox and Senator Lodge were supreme, haters of all change, upholders of the old cutthroat world of labour slavery and capitalist profit. Grab and grab . . . It was driving him mad. Even Belgium wanted to grab now, and was asking the Allies to back her against Holland so as to get back Dutch Limburg and the mouth of the Scheldt, to redress an historical injustice — of which nobody had said a word for eighty years. Always it was nationality running mad, the fetish of flags. Wales and England could live under a common British King, the Anglo-Americans of the Eastern States

and the Hispano-Americans of the southwest under a common president, but all these new people wanted separation, hatred, armies.

Would Parliament stand in the way? He smiled. Parliament was a tied house, not even a public one; it was run by national bosses responsible for no government department, therefore responsible for nothing; the cabinet left out the great departments. Money was voted without specific object, spent and accounted for by a gesture. All cheques were blank. Acts of Parliament did not avail, for their working, by means of regulations, lay in the hands of the bosses; they, too, were blank cheques. Sir Hugh laughed aloud at the idea of Parliament rising against tyranny: why should it rise? With a hundred of its members in paid offices under the Government, and half the rest placated with anything between the Grand Cross of the Bath and the fifth class of the O. B. E., why should the Tory junkers rise? The world was their orange. He saw what it led to, to an increased public contempt for Parliament, for the withdrawal of labour from an assembly of political domestics, to an unconstitutional control by massed trade unions outside, who, *sic volo, sic jubeo,* would obey or not as they chose — until the time came to upset the *bourgeois* applecart and light with its spokes the first bonfire of revolution.

The idea of revolution terrified him, and yet he found himself driven towards extremism because he was a moderate, and nobody would listen to him, because nobody wanted to build a harmonious new world. As he clung to the hope of future peace, sufficient food and freedom for all men, the ruling class was beating on his hands. "What else but revolution," he thought with a shiver, "can get rid of leaders who won't lead anywhere — of

the Angus Cawstons, K. B. E. — of the Gadarene Club, heaving in its fat — of the Mausoleum Club, pickling in its vinegar?" Those people were getting into power, backed by the people's faculty for hatred; they were getting in, the smugs, the slys, the barnacles. They were going to make a limpet State, cling to their property, prepare new wars by preparing new hatreds. Those men who had shown themselves incapable of working the old order — were they going to make a new one? They could make nothing, those men on the make.

For a moment he wondered what he meant by a new order. He had little hope of Labour. Labour had voted for hate. He did not trust socialism in any form; he saw it as an alternative tyranny because it was worked by alternative tyrants. His vision was feudal; he would have liked a country run by trustee aristocrats, who would live no more splendidly than their servants, but would live for them, for the honour of leading them, for the privilege of helping them, for the joy of seeing rise factories rich in beauty and schools rich in culture. He knew it could not be, that Platonic dream — but all he asked of these new rulers was some sort of dream, different from the old, dead world; that they should not be content with restoring exactly the old world of struggle and domination, but dream dreams, as Monica said, the stuff that worlds are made of . . .

Again he thought of Monica. She stood away from the world and the slogan of the new society: "Squeeze the lemon." No room for her any more than for him. He wondered what she meant by her question. Hurn, probably. He knew that she had seen him several times while he was serving in France. He sighed: he mustn't make himself responsible for his daughter; she had better mar her life than have it made by her father. Though,

perhaps, he interfered too little. There was Sylvia, three months married to Oliver March. He could not detach himself from them, for the young man had broken with his people and a career must be made for him. Sylvia would have a child in the summer, too. How angry she was about it; she had had to give up the idea of canteen work with the troops in Germany. He smiled as he remembered her disappointment, for, as she put it, "Germany's the only place now; Flanders is so out of date."

Slowly he walked back, but the sun was out now, and he did not want to shut himself up in his study, so he walked on until he reached Charles Oakley's house. The old man had been ill and now could hardly make himself understood. He was nearly seventy-eight. As he went in Sir Hugh wondered whether he would hear the familiar sound of the fretsaw, and whether his uncle was preparing some intricate inlay, say, for presentation to Wilson. As he went into the library he saw Charles Oakley in the big armchair by the long table. The old man smiled at him, knotting his brows to see him better. Indeed, now he was more than Pan grown old, he was Pan grown senile. He lowered his eyes, and as Sir Hugh saw what was happening he shrank. Pinned all over the table still lay the war maps, and with a baby smile the old man was shifting flags upon the Western front.

"Uncle Charles! Uncle Charles!" cried Sir Hugh in a voice filled with horror. "What are you doing? The war's over."

The old man looked up, smiled again, and his soft fingers of pink putty went on in idiotic satisfaction, shifting the little flags of the past over the battlegrounds of the future.

XVIII

KALLIKRATES slowly pushed his head from under the cabinet in the hall. He had slept there, in warm darkness, all the afternoon. He watched to see whether old Toss was asleep on the hearthrug, then remembered that Toss was dead. Confident, he came out, shook the dust from his golden coat, listened. Dinner time. The humans were eating. All was well and secure in a desert world. So, jaunty still, though his trot was a little laden by his five years, he crossed the hall towards the study. By the desk he hesitated, thoughtfully rubbed himself against the staff which Stephen had used in his lameness. A sensual thrill ran through him; the world felt good. Then, no longer light, but strong-bodied, he leapt on the corner of the desk. A long stare of his amber eyes assured him that nothing dangerous lay there. So, slowly, cautiously, he sank down, one after the other folded the velvet gauntlets of his paws, composed his squat head into the sumptuous silk of his ruff. His eyelids began to droop, the watchful strip of gold below them grew less and less. He breathed louder; by degrees there purred forth from his throat the soft song that conceals neither joy, nor pain, nor hope, but is all content, uncritical and faith eternal in the permanence of aloof good things in an unchanging world.

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